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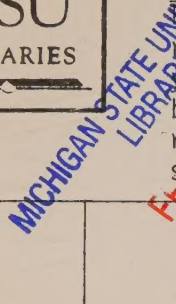

PICKUP SPR 1988

Mr. GAY

GAY

Mr. GAY

BEING A PICTURE OF THE LIFE *and* TIMES OF THE AUTHOR *of the* BEGGAR'S OPERA.

By OSCAR SHERWIN.

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To
Stella

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

OSCAR SHERWIN was born and educated in New York. After graduating from Columbia College he entered business but abandoned it after a short period to return to Columbia for graduate work. *Mr. Gay* is his first published work.

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Mr. GAY

Here lie the ashes of Mr. John Gay
The warmest friend;
The most benevolent man:
Who maintained
Independency
In low circumstances of fortune;
Integrity
In the midst of a corrupt age
And that equal serenity of mind,
Which conscious goodness alone can give,
Through the whole course of his life.

CHAPTER I

On the Art of Walking the Streets of London

A FAT bard—I repeat—a fat bard with a thick cane under his arm is trudging his way through a winding alley of dirty, tumble-down houses. He is dressed in black stockings, firm, well-hammered shoes, dark blue silk hose, and jacket trimmed with lace at collar and sleeves, a black wig, and a black cocked hat. He is on his way to the Pope's Head Tavern in Lombard Street.

It is early morning. The people are stirring. A bedraggled damsel here and there is carrying fish from Billingsgate. A sallow milkmaid is chalking her gains on the door of a house, while her asses bray before the gates. A coach dashes by. Our bard jumps to the wall, and narrowly misses being splashed with mud.

The paths are narrow. They are divided from the road by a row of posts. There is barely room

for two persons to pass each other comfortably. On either side runs a miry ditch. It is the "kennel." It is swollen well nigh to overflowing.

Industry awakens her busy sons. Shops open, coaches roll, carts shake the ground, and streets and alleys soon resound with passing cries. Cumbersome coaches, sedan chairs, wheelbarrows full of oysters, porters bearing huge burdens, funeral coaches, wedding processions—all crowd and hurry and jostle along. The noise and smell are tremendous. Shouts of chair menders, knife grinders, broom sellers, old-clothes men, street fighters, are mingled with those of hawkers of cherries, saloop, barley, broth, rice, milk, Shrewsbury cakes, eggs, muffins, matches, honey, fish, tarts, spigots, combs, buckles, pewter pots, inks, shoe laces, a thousand and one things. The cries are deafening.

"Buy a rabbet, buy a rabbet"—"Buy a fine table basket"—"Bread and me-e-at, bread and me-e-at"—"Salt, sa-alt, white Wor-ster-shire sa-alt"—"Buy a fine mou-se trap"—"I ha' white radish, white hard lettice, white young onyons"—"Buy a

mat, a mil mat, mat or a hassock for your pew"—"Whiting, maids, whiting"—"Hot fine oatcakes"—"Small coales here"—"Will you buy any milk to-day?"—"Rally up, ladies! rally up! buy! buy! buy!"

Our bard steers his way past the hogsheads rolled down from drays by porters, past the barrels lowered by brewers into open cellars, past the combs and other articles strung on twines, dangling in the air, and through a maze of carts, coaches, wheelbarrows, and their bawling owners.

Up the street he sees a chandler bearing a basket brimful of tallow, and a surly butcher with his greasy tray and his hands dyed with blood. "I'll wait until they pass, lest they soil my coat." And so he does, and trudges on.

A lamplighter, standing upon his ladder, is enjoying himself by spilling oil upon the heads of passers-by. The poet eyes him fiercely, and menaces him with his stout cane. It has the desired effect. Hat, hose, and jacket remain unsullied. But shoes are brown with mud. At the corner he calls a bootblack, provided with a ball of blacking (oil and

soot contained in a pipkin), a three-legged stool, a pair of hard brushes, and a cast-off periwig wherewith the youth removes the covering of mud.

Metropolitan habitués, beaux and belles alike, in sedan chairs proceed to Court drawing-rooms, royal levées, assemblies, White's Chocolate House in St. James Street. Sedan chairmen, a thick-set, thick-legged race of Irishmen with pug noses and red faces, dig their chair poles in the ribs of passers-by, or squeeze them against the wall. Our bard avoids them sedulously.

A *petit-maître*, humming a soft minuet, with mincing steps hugs the wall, as close as possible to the shops and house fronts. Sky-blue velvet coat, elaborately laced, a snuffbox in his pocket, a slender sword at his side, and under his arm a clouded cane. His wig is powdered, perfumed, curled. Him, as the miller, the poet avoids, lest clouds of powder fly.

The creaking of many signboards on their rusty hinges as they sway in the wind gives notice of an approaching shower. Gentlemen get into coaches or chairs, or seek the kindly shelter of

coffee houses and taverns. Ladies, under pretense of buying, crowd the shops of the linen draper. The hosier takes down his poles hung with stockings. The Thames watermen clothe their tilt boats with blue in the hope of tempting a passenger. The bookseller, whose shop is a square, strips his rails. The nodding coachman, snoring and dreaming of fancied fares, is rudely awakened by a wild gust of wind and a downpour of rain. The kennels swell with rapid streams, and rush in muddy torrents to the Thames. The town is afloat, but our poet is safe in a fruit shop.

A beau, lolling in a gilded chariot, views with contempt the spattered passengers drenched by the rain. A rumbling cart, filled high with mud, draws near. The dust man sees the fop, and with spiteful rage sends his ponderous wheel crashing against the fragile chariot. Down falls the shrieking beau, with his embroidered coat and powdered face defiled in a stream of mud.

The storm subsides. People stream out of shops and stalls, taverns and coffee houses—and the world is busy and crowded, alive and noisy again.

Our poet once more trudges on. At last he arrives at the corner of Lombard Street. He looks with silent pleasure at his clean blue silk hose and jacket, his clean lace, his shiny shoes—part of the hundred pounds which my Lord Treasurer has given him to fit him up for the Court of Hanover. Suddenly someone rudely and heavily brushes against him. He looks down. It is a dirty little chimney-sweep, black with soot, who gets up, laughs, and runs away. And John Gay is left standing with a woeful expression on his face as he stares at his sullied clothes. *Fortunam nemo ab inconstantia* . . . Poor John Gay!

CHAPTER II

Early Years

On September 16, 1685, a chubby little youngster is baptized in the Old Parish Church at Barnstaple. He is the youngest son of William Gay, who has married the daughter of Jonathan Hanmer, the leading Non-conformist divine of the town. They have five children, three girls and two boys, and they live in a large house, called the Red Cross, at the south end of Joy Street. They are religious folk, and with their little ones troop to church every Sunday, where young John amuses himself by carving his name on the seats of the pew. The family prospers, but Death knocks suddenly at the door. The mother is called away, and a year later, 1695, the father follows.

At ten John Gay is an orphan. There are four paternal uncles to care for the children. As is customary, the elder son is trained for a profession, while the younger is brought up to a trade. But

Jonathan, the elder, is not anxious to become a clergyman, as his friends desire, and, severe studies not suiting his natural genius, he betakes himself to military pursuits.

John is educated at the free grammar school of his native town. It is under the head mastership of Robert Luck, a riming pedagogue, or, as he puts it, "occasionally a humble servant of the Muses for half a century"—a staunch churchman, a surrogate of the Archdeaconry Court of Barnstaple, and an intolerant foe of dissent in every shape and form. There is a coldness between the two, as Gay's grandfather, Jonathan Hanmer, is the founder of the Independent Dissenting Body in the town. And so poor Gay suffers, and is often thrashed for his father's sins.

He has his intimate friends—William Fortescue, and Aaron Hill of the sweet voice, tall, extremely fair, with brown hair and dark blue eyes. The days pass pleasantly. He becomes enamored of Ovid, Virgil, Horace, glances at Greek and Italian, and forms a useful acquaintanceship with the French tongue.

Schooldays are soon over, and John is apprenticed to a silk mercer in London. He is a sort of slave. He wears neither hat nor cap in his master's presence. He cannot marry. He cannot have any dealings on his own account. All he earns is his master's.

A later historian, Edward Gibbon, justly remarks: "Our most respectable families have not disdained the counting-house or even the shop . . . and in England, as well as in the Italian commonwealths, gentility is not degraded by the exercise of trade."—(Gibbon's great-grandfather was a linen draper.) Gay has no taste for trade. He wearies of his restraint and servility. He is so fond of reading and study that he frequently neglects to exert himself in displaying silks and velvets to the ladies. Not able to bear the confinement of a shop, he becomes depressed in spirits. There is a consequent decline in health, and he is obliged to quit.

He retires to Barnstaple in the hope of receiving the benefit of his native air, and stays with his maternal uncle, the Reverend John Hanmer, the Non-conformist minister of Barnstaple. He dab-

bles in verse. He falls in love. A sunny afternoon will find him in the parlor, seated on a dark colored mahogany chair, its seat, back, and arms stuffed and covered with brown leather. The folks call it "Gay's chair." It is a curious chair. Under the arms are drawers, with the necessary instruments for writing. Each drawer turns on a pivot, and has attached to it a candlestick. There is a wooden leaf for holding a book or writing upon, which may be raised or depressed or entirely let down, at the poet's pleasure. Under the seat is a drawer for books or papers, and behind it is concealed another drawer, curiously fastened by a small bolt. The bolt is not removable until the larger drawer is taken out. Here the poet hides his first offerings to the Muse, and pretty verses to the lady of his love:

TO MISS JANE SCOTT

The Welsh girl is pretty,
The English girl fair,
The Irish deem'd witty,
The French *debonnaire;*
Though all may invite me,
I'd value them not,

The charms that delight me,
I find in a Scot.

And so he does—until a new spring dances around.

CHAPTER III

Authorship

THERE is sad news of brother Jonathan. He has committed suicide. Serving with distinction under the Duke of Marlborough, and promoted captain by Queen Anne, he has suddenly put an end to a promising career. The despatches mention a quarrel with his Colonel. Anyway, John inherits part of the paternal estate. And he lives as a private gentleman, "I'll have you know."

He is now one-and-twenty. Ginger is hot in his mouth. Bagnios and Covent Garden and Pall Mall and The Boar's Head and Cock Tavern and Dolly's Chop House and Garraway's and Turk's Head—the whole round of them—and eyes, and lips, and breasts—and his heart goes bang and cock-a-hoop.

Then when the pulse beats low and regularly, whole seas of cray-fish soup, and meat and pudding and huge bumpers of ale till the night is half run, and it is time to reel and stagger home. The poet is

getting fat. But there is comfort in knowing that some of his intimates are yet more corpulent—

Wondering Maine, so fat, with laughing eyes,
Gay, Maine, and Cheney, boon companions dear,
Gay fat, Maine fatter, and Cheney huge of size.

He acquires a passion for finery. "One Mr. Gay, an unhappy youth, who writes pastorals during the time of Divine Service, whose case is the more deplorable, as he hath miserably lavished away, in buttons and loops for his coat, all that silver he should have reserved for his soul's health.

I sold my sheep and lambkins too,
For silver loops and garments blue:
My boxen haut-boy sweet of sound,
For lace that edg'd mine hat around:
For Lightfoot and my scrip I got
A gorgeous sword, and eke a knot."

In this manner money has slipped through his fingers.

But Gay has to eat—and ravenously. He hires himself out as amanuensis to Aaron Hill, his schoolmate. They set on foot the project of answering

questions in a paper styled "The British Apollo, or Curious Amusements for the Ingenious." The first number appears on March 13, 1708. It decides wagers at cards, gives good advice to shopkeepers and their apprentices, invents fictitious questions, and answers them.

The poem "Wine," written in 1708, has added little silver to Gay's pocket. He decides on another project. About this time the peaceful inhabitants of London and Westminster are greatly perturbed by the exploits of certain high-spirited and humorous young gentlemen whose midnight frolics give them the name of Mohocks. The cement of their assembly is an ambition to do all possible hurt to their fellow creatures. They first get drunk. This done, they parole the streets, knock down, stab, wound, or *carbonado* all who have the misfortune to come in their path. A section, styling itself "dancing masters," keeps its victims in perpetual motion by thrusting swords through their legs. Another group puts matrons into tar barrels and tumbles them down Snow Hill. The people are incensed. A royal proclamation is issued, March

17, 1712, against the disturbers of the peace.

Gay writes a timely pamphlet, "An Argument proving that the present Mohocks and Hawkubites are the Gog and Magog mention'd in the Revelation, and therefore that this vain and transitory world will shortly be brought to its final dissolution." It is a penny single-sheet folio—and sells. Gay follows it up with a tragi-comical farce, "The Mohocks," dedicated to Mr. John Dennis, the critic. It is printed, but not acted. However, the trifle procures a few guineas from the bookseller, which is all that the author has in view.

Gay seeks the company of literary men. The numerous taverns and coffee houses which swarm in London are the favorite gathering places of the literary lights of the period. Any man who can pay, and will behave decently, finds easy entrance to these resorts. Here the poet meets Doctor Arbuthnot, Congreve, Addison, Steele and others. Lip service is presently followed by pen service. In a little pamphlet, "The Present State of Wit," 1711, the poet essays to give the histories and characteristics of all the periodical papers of his time,

monthly, weekly, or diurnal. He disclaims politics, never caring "one farthing either for Whig or Tory." Swift, Addison, Steele, are warmly praised. In return the literary giants pat young Gay kindly on the head. What's more, Mr. Steele has sent him a complete set of the "Tatler," in four volumes on royal paper.

Fortune is smiling. Gay is soon to be on terms of intimate friendship with a still more important literary figure. "Pray give my service to all my few friends, and to Mr. Gay in particular," writes Pope to his friend Henry Cromwell, July 15, 1711. The acquaintanceship between the two poets has begun. Three months later Gay, in his "On a Miscellany of Poems to Bernard Lintot," takes the opportunity to ingratiate himself with a number of people, in so far as he can do this by means of compliments—with Buckingham, Sheffield, Congreve, Prior, Granville, Addison, and especially Pope:

> His various numbers charm our ravish'd ears,
> His steady judgment far outshoots his years,
> And early in the youth the God appears.

Pope is pleased. On December 21, 1711, he writes to Cromwell (hatless Cromwell, with the red breeches), "I will willingly return Mr. Gay my thanks for the favor of his poem, and in particular for his kind mention of me." The intimacy waxes stronger. Another letter from Pope bears this protest: "I desire you will not, either out of modesty, or a vicious distrust of another's value for you—those two eternal foes to merit—imagine that your letters and conversations are not always welcome to me. There is no man more entirely fond of good nature or ingenuity than myself, and I have seen too much of these qualities in Mr. Gay to be anything less than his most affectionate friend and real servant." By 1715 Pope and Gay are bosom friends. Pope leaves London:

> Adieu to all but Gay alone,
> Whose soul, sincere and free,
> Loves all mankind, but flatters none—
> And so may starve with me.

CHAPTER IV

The Duchess of Monmouth

Gay is now domestic secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth, the widow of the unhappy son of Charles II, executed for high treason in 1683. She has not long mourned her first husband; after three years she has married Charles, third Baron Cornwallis. But constancy is not a virtue in these days. However, she does not forget that her first husband was of royal blood, and to the end of her days she preserves a regal state. She is a splendid patroness, with all the life and fire of youth, with wit and good nature. Gay is to be companion, secretary, and, if need be, serving man, holding the plate at the sideboard. In return he is to have board, lodging, pocket money, and ample leisure. He certainly advances little on the boast of independence. But the duties are pleasant. They require little more labor than my Lady's lap dog.

My Lady awakes at noon. When she does, she

signalizes the fact by three violent tugs at the bell, and as many raps with the slipper on the floor. Her black servant enters and places at her bedside chocolate and cream, of which she drinks two, perhaps three, dishes. Before the cups are cleared away, her intimate friends arrive and are ushered into her chamber. Her secretary lounges on the sofa near her dressing table. To the left Sir Fopling Flutters, the Dapperwits, and the Themises make way for mercers, mantua makers, lacemen, milliners, haberdashers, and other ministers to female parure. In turn these give place to a small army of duns and creditors, presenting their bills. Gay ushers these nuisances outside and gets rid of them. While engaged in dressing, my Lady fondles her lap dog, prattles to her parrot, her monkey, and her squirrel, and instructs her secretary with the order of the day.

Then down to dinner. It is two o'clock. At four she pays a visit, in company with her lap dog, monkey, and secretary, either to toy shops or auction rooms, where articles of vertu, cockle shells, looking glasses, snuffboxes, rings, masks, specta-

cles, fancy china, and Oriental knickknacks of all descriptions are bought and sold. Gay's fancy is captured by a cabinet with burnished gold, a rich brocade, a tall blue jar. "Will my Lady purchase them? They are exquisite." She does so.

Next a chair to the playhouse, and tea at six. And if my Lady wishes, Gay accompanies her to Mrs. Dewes', or Lady Carteret's, or Lady Dysart's. Here the ladies gather over cups that cheer but not inebriate, and discuss every conceivable subject, from religion to coquetry. Tea over, card playing begins. Is it basset, or ombre, or loo, or whist? The game continues until the toll voice of the drowsy watchman, bawling the morning hours, rouses the ladies to don their hoods and cloaks, and wend their way home.

As domestic secretary, Gay must assist my Lady in her shopping. This is particularly painful to the poet. He detests those dandy shop assistants, so free in their manners, who have their chocolate in the morning and their "green tea" two hours afterwards, and are especially addicted to perfumes and

fine linen. In fact, he detests all fops. But he has to listen to such conversation as this:

"This, madam, is wonderful, charming. This, madam, is so diverting a silk. This, madam, my stars, how cool it looks! But this, madam, ye gods! Would I had ten thousand yards of it! It suits your Ladyship's face wonderful well."

My Lady looks inquiringly at Gay. He nods assent. Fifteen shillings a yard. My Lady offers ten. The man is astounded.

"Fan me, ye winds! Your Ladyship rallies me! Should I part with it at such a price, the weavers would rise upon the very shop. Was you at the Park last night, madam? Have you seen the 'Tatler' to-day? Your Ladyship shall abate me sixpence"—and so on.

My Lady is a princess. She does not bargain. "Pardon me, sir, you know the Paris mode, and have gathered politesse from the Courts abroad. Parbleu! is not our boasted London a country town?"—Bah! these jibbering idiots!

And so my Lady passes her time in dressing,

shopping, visiting, intriguing, and card playing. Above all, card playing—basset, ombre, quadrille, and faro. And Gay passes his time in attending her Ladyship. He has leisure, ample leisure. So much of it that fatty wrinkles are creeping around his laughing eyes.

Mr. Pope is well aware of his friend's natural indolence. He is careful to urge him to devote himself to literary pursuits. "I shall see you this winter with much greater pleasure than I could the last, and I hope as much of your time as your Duchess will allow you to spare to any friend, will not be thought lost upon one who is as much so as any man. . . . I must also put you in mind, though you are secretary to this lady, you are likewise secretary to nine other ladies, and are to write sometimes for them too. He who is forced to live wholly upon those ladies' favours is indeed in as precarious a condition as any who does what Chaucer says for subsistence—but they are very agreeable companions, like other ladies, when a man only passes a night or so with them at his leisure and away."

Gay is the most amiable of men. He never resents advice, perhaps because he rarely follows it. In this case he is surprisingly amenable. The laziest of men drives his quill with some assiduity. He works diligently. Then again, it is so much better than listening to some *petit maître* in a dress shop.

He corresponds with Pope. Pope writes: "I am very much recreated and refreshed with the news of the advancement of 'The Fan,' which I doubt not will delight the eye and sense of the fair, as long as that agreeable machine shall play in the hands of posterity." And again on August 23, 1713: "I am glad your 'Fan' is mounted so soon, but I would have you varnish and glaze it at your leisure, and polish the sticks as much as you can. You may then cause it to be borne in the hands of both sexes, no less in Britain than it is in China, where it is ordinary for a mandarin to fan himself cool after a debate, and a statesman to hide his face with it when he tells a grave lie."—"The Fan" flutters into a rather cool, inhospitable world

on December 8, 1713. It is unsuccessful. Friends are kind in their praises of it.

Gay has also written "Rural Sports," a Georgic, and inscribed it to Mr. Pope. It seals their friendship. Pope takes him under his massive wings—"one of my élèves." He makes him known to Swift. Gay immediately sends a copy of his poem to the gloomy Dean of St. Patrick's. The reply is in a gentle, chiding tone:—"The extent of your country skill is in fishing for roaches or gudgeons at the highest." True, inasmuch as our poet cannot distinguish rye from barley, or an oak from a crab tree.

Gay is now a man of letters, and has many friends. He is a general favorite of the whole association of wits. They regard him as a playfellow rather than as a partner, and treat him with more fondness than respect. His gentle good nature, his utter helplessness, appeal to those of sterner mold and stuff. Pope and Swift love him as they love no other man. Parnell, Arbuthnot, Ford—the "joyous Ford"—and Bolingbroke have a deep affection for him. Indeed, when the "Memoirs of

Scriblerus" are in contemplation, Gay, comparatively unknown, is invited to take a hand in the composition with the literary giants of the day. The design of the "Memoirs" is to ridicule all the false tastes in learning under "the character of a man of capacity enough that has dipped into every art and science, but injudiciously in each." It is begun by a club, the Scriblerus Club, composed of some of the greatest wits of the age—Lord Oxford, the Bishop of Rochester, Mr. Pope, Mr. Congreve, Dr. Arbuthnot, Dean Swift, and others. Gay often holds the pen, and adds his trickle of venom to the raging flood of the Dean's.

CHAPTER V

The Court of Hanover

Mr. Pope asks a favor. A writer in the "Guardian" has discussed the pastoral in a series of five papers. He has given the most extravagant praise to Ambrose Philips. "Theocritus," he has remarked, "left his dominions to Virgil, Virgil left his to his son Spenser, and Spenser was succeeded by his eldest born, Philips." Mr. Pope has not been mentioned. He has set himself to redress the injustice—"oh yes, indeed!" He has written a sixth paper, in which he has continued to illustrate the true principles of pastoral poetry from Philips' practice, but in such a way as to show the judicious reader, by examples given, the absurdity of Philips and the superior merit of himself. The article has been forwarded anonymously to the "Guardian" and has been published. Mr. Philips is furious. He has provided himself with a birch rod and has threatened to flog Mr. Pope. Would friend Gay con-

tinue the warfare and burlesque Mr. Philips' performances? Of course. Hence "The Shepherd's Week," dedicated to Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, makes its appearance on August 15, 1714.

Gay begins his "Proeme to the Courteous Reader" with a palpable hit and a pretty bit of fooling, but is soon carried away by his interest in his subject, and tries to produce a true picture of rural life in his own day.

With all his unworldliness, Gay has a keen eye on the main chance. Finding himself surrounded by men of influence, he looks to his acquaintances to further his interests—a government place or a sinecure. Thanks to the well-directed influence of Swift, he is appointed secretary to Lord Claredon, who is about to make a visit as Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of Hanover. It is Lord Claredon's mission formally to convey to the Elector George Lewis the condolences of Queen Anne on the death of his aged mother, the Electress Sophia, heiress presumptive to the British throne, who has passed away on June 8, 1714.

Gay receives a hundred pounds as an advance on his salary, that he may buy clothes. He goes away a happy man. He addresses a letter to friend and benefactor Jonathan Swift: "I am quite off the Duchess of Monmouth . . . I am attending my Lord Treasurer [the Earl of Oxford] for his bounty, in order to set me out; which he has promised me upon the following petition which I sent him by Doctor Arbuthnot.

The Epigrammatical Petition of John Gay

I'm no more to converse with the swains,
But go where fine people resort;
One can live without money on plains,
But never without it at court.

Yet if when with swains I did gambol,
I array'd me in silver and blue,
When abroad and in courts I shall ramble,
Pray, my lord, how much money will do?

It is thought my Lord Claredon will make but a short stay at Hanover. If it were possible that any recommendation could be procured to make me more distinguished than ordinary, during my stay

at Court, I should think myself very happy, if you could continue any method to procure it; for I am told that their civilities very rarely descend so low as to the secretary. I have all the reason to acknowledge this as wholly owing to you. And the many favours I have received from you, purely out of your love for doing good, assures me you will not forget me in my absence."

To which the Dean replies: "I wonder how you could have the impudence to know where I am . . . You begin to be an able courtier, which I know from two instances. First, for giving me thanks for your preferment; secondly, for wheedling my Lord Treasurer with an epigram which I like very well. . . . But pray learn to be a manager"—as well ask a March hare to grow feathers—"and pick up language as fast as you can, and get Aristotle upon politics, and read other books upon government, Grotius 'de Jure Belli et Pacis,' and accounts of negotiations and treaties, etc., etc., and be a perfect master of the Latin, and be able to learn everything of the Court where you go . . . and take Mr. Lewis's advice in all things,

and do not despise mine, and so God bless you, and make you able to make my fortunes."

Gay is amenable. The passion for Court preferment has entirely possessed him. That and an occasional pursuit in literature are the only things that stir him out of his lethargic bliss or disgust. He does all his friend Swift advises and much more. He sets himself seriously to the task of schooling himself in the arts of diplomacy. Ennui he has—plenty of it—that *sine qua non* of courtly society. The implements of the diplomat he seeks to acquire.

Despite his forebodings, the civilities of the Court of Hanover do happily "descend so low as to the secretary." He is presented to the royal circle, and holds converse with the highest in the land. He makes the acquaintance of Henrietta Howard, afterwards Lady Suffolk, and is presently on a footing of intimate friendship. Fortune prospers.

To Arbuthnot: "You remember, I suppose, that I was to write you abundance of letters from Hanover; but as one of the most distinguishing qualities

of a politician is secrecy, you must not expect from me any arcanas of state. There is another thing that is necessary to establish the character of a politician, which is to seem always to be full of affairs of state; to know the consultations of the cabinet council, when at the same time all his politics are collected from newspapers. Which of these two causes my secrecy is owing to, I leave you to determine. There is yet one thing more that is extremely necessary for a foreign minister, which he can no more be without than an artisan without his tools—I mean the terms of his art. To the end that I might be qualified for an employment of this nature, I have made it my business to read memoirs, treatises, etc. And as a dictionary of law terms is thought necessary for your beginners, so I thought a dictionary of terms of state would be no less useful for young politicians. . . . I have not made great progress in this piece; but, however, I will just give you a specimen of it.

"Politician—'What are the necessary tools for a Prince to work with?'

"Student—'Ministers of State.'

"Politician—'What are the two great qualities of a Minister of State?'

"Student—'Secrecy and despatch.'

"Politician—'What should a foreign Minister's behaviour be, when he has his first audience?'

"Student—'He should bow profoundly, speak deliberately, and wear both sides of his long periwig before.'"

And so on and so on. "By these few questions and answers you may be able to make some judgment of the usefulness of this political treatise . . . My Lord Claredon is very much approved of at Court, and I believe is not dissatisfied with his reception. We have not much variety of diversions. What we did yesterday, and to-day, we shall do to-morrow, which is, to go to Court, and walk in the gardens at Herenhausen. If I write any more, my letter will be just like my diversions, the same thing over and over again." Merely a pose. Our poet is enjoying himself immensely, and satisfied in the security and honor of his position.

But calamity has the devastating habit of ap-

pearing suddenly and without notice in our poet's life. On July 30, 1714, Lord Oxford is dismissed. The white staff is given to the Duke of Shrewsbury. His first act is to recall the Tory ambassador. Two days later Queen Anne dies, and the Elector George Lewis succeeds to the throne under the title of George I. Lord Claredon returns at once to England. With him comes Gay, saddened, his hopes blasted to the ground. *Fortunam nemo ab inconstantia* . . . Poor John Gay!

"Welcome to your native soil! Welcome to your friends!—thrice welcome to me! Whether returned in glory, blessed with Court interest, the love and familiarity of the great, and filled with agreeable hopes, or melancholy with dejection—whether returned a triumphant Whig or a desponding Tory, equally all hail! Equally beloved and welcome to me!" And friend Pope goes on: "If happy, I am to share in your elevation; if unhappy, you have still a warm corner in my heart, and a retreat at Binfield in the worst of times at

your service. If you are a Tory, I know it can proceed from nothing but your gratitude to a few people who endeavoured to serve you, and whose politics were never your concern. If you are a Whig, as I rather hope, and as I think your principles and mine, as brother poets, had ever a bias to the side of liberty, I know you are incapable of being so much of either party as to be good for nothing. Therefore, once more, whatever you are, or in whatever state you are, all hail! . . . Come and make merry with me in much feasting. We will feed among the lilies. By the lilies I mean the ladies, with whom I hope you have fed to satiety"—fed, but not to satiety—"Hast thou passed through many countries and not tasted the delights thereof? Hast thou not left of thy issue in divers lands, that German Gay and Dutch Gay" (our poet thinks for a while—*perhaps*)—"may arise to write pastorals and sing their songs in strange countries. . . ."

A word of advice in the poetical way. Will Gay write something on the King or Prince or Princess? On whatsoever foot he stands with the Court, it

can do no harm. A cheering word and a wise address from friend Pope to his protégé. Perhaps a few guineas in the bargain.

But poor Gay is inconsolable. He is practically penniless. He has no employment. The Duchess of Monmouth has dismissed him from her service earlier in the year. And he has drawn a considerable portion—a hundred pounds, in fact—of his salary as secretary in advance, to buy clothes. He can do no better than follow Pope's suggestion. Perhaps a patron . . . A minister may be good, but ministers go out of office. A member of the reigning family will be better.

In November he publishes "A letter to a Lady Occasioned by the Arrival of Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Wales." Caroline's virtues are extolled, and then, lest there be any excuse for misunderstanding, our poet states in plain terms that he has desired a post at Court, and that he is ready to accept such employment, if coupled with a suitable remuneration:

Places, I found, were daily giv'n away,
And yet no friendly gazette mention'd Gay.

The fulsome, high-sounding flattery is powerless to move the Court. No place is found for him; this for two reasons. First, King George can talk no English, his ministers can talk no German. So he absents himself from meetings of the cabinet. The cabinet asserts an independent position. Walpole becomes a power to deal with, while George I dallies with his German mistresses. And Walpole dislikes John Gay. Secondly, Gay has, a few months before, committed an unpardonable *faux pas*. "Tell me," Swift asks, "are you not under original sin by the dedication of your eclogue ["The Shepherd's Week"] to Lord Bolingbroke?"

CHAPTER VI

Mrs. Howard

Hatless Cromwell of the red breeches is leaning forward in his seat at the Drury Lane. He is watching the play, "The What D'Ye Call It," a tragi-comi-pastoral-farce from the pen of his friend John Gay. Honest hatless Cromwell is deaf. Hearing none of the words, and seeing the action to be tragical, he is much astonished to find that the audience laughs. The common people of pit and gallery receive the play at first with great gravity and sedateness. Some few shed tears. But they soon take the hint, and are loud in their claps and applause. Templars have come to scoff and hiss. They too stay to laugh and applaud. Some look upon the play as a mere jest upon the tragic poets; others, as a satire upon the late war. They decide to ask the author. Is it tragedy, comedy, pastoral, or farce? The author is puzzled. He is as doubtful as they. "It's—'The What D'Ye Call It.'"

Anyway, the play runs for five nights. It brings John Gay a hundred pounds, and Lintot adds a few more pounds for the publishing rights. (The financial point of view is the point of view always uppermost in the poet's mind.)

Gay is now a popular dramatist. He is also notorious. He is called a blockhead, and his friend Pope a knave. But he has become known to people of high social rank who, like his brethren of the pen, take him up and make a pet of him. First there is my Lord Burlington, generous Burlington, who invites the poet to his "fair palace" in Piccadilly, a striking and solitary exception to the bastard and commonplace architecture around it. Then there is my Lord's house at Chiswick, adorned with temples and obelisks and statues; too small to live in and too large to hang to a watch. Gay repays the compliment. He describes his visit to Exeter in a poetical epistle to his host:

While you, my Lord, bid stately piles ascend,
Or in your Chiswick bow'rs enjoy your friend;
Where Pope unloads the boughs within his reach,
Of purple vine, blue plumb, and blushing peach;

I journey far—You know fat Bards might tire,
And, mounted, sent me forth your trusty squire.

During his stay in Devonshire, Gay writes "Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London" (1716). It is published by subscription. In addition he receives from Lintot forty-three pounds for the copyright of the book. Doctor Arbuthnot writes, "Gay has got so much money by his 'Art of Walking the Streets of London' that he is ready to set up his equipage—he is just going to the bank to negotiate some exchange bills."

The irons are hot in the fire. Another play is written, "Three Hours After Marriage," produced on January 16, 1717. It is greeted with hisses and cat calls, and driven off the stage after a run of seven nights. The purpose of the play is to bring into contempt Doctor Woodward, the fossilist, an eminent geologist and a most estimable man. He is the Bridegroom of the piece. John Dennis (Sir Tremendous), Lady Winchelsea (Phoebe Clinket), the Duchess of Monmouth (the Countess of Hippokekoana), and Colley Cibber (Plotwell) are also victimized. So Gay pays his debt to the Countess

of Winchelsea who has spoken contemptuously of him. As for the Duchess of Monmouth, she has never even offered to take him back as secretary to her household.

My Lord Warwick pays Gay a visit. He presses him in a very particular manner to go and see Mr. Addison. The matter is this—Gay has parodied in "The What D'Ye Call It" some of Addison's lines from "Cato." Addison has answered by attacking the play for obscenity. Gay is aroused. He has written "A Letter from a Lady in the City to a Lady in the Country." In it he has quoted the passages declaimed against, but at their side he has opposed other passages, quite obscene, from Addison's and Steele's plays. "A Letter" is ready for publication. If it is printed, it will make Addison appear ridiculous. Addison is a sensitive soul. He cannot bear to appear ridiculous.

Gay goes to visit Mr. Addison. He finds him in a very weak way. Mr. Addison receives the poet in the kindest manner. He begs his pardon. He has injured him greatly, very greatly. If he lives, the poet shall find that he will make it up to him. A

glittering promise—from an honest man. But unfortunately, Mr. Addison is dead a week later.

Gay must live. He has no regular means. An occasional poem, an occasional play, are scarcely sufficient to provide an income adequate to his needs. He is extravagant in dress. He is fond of good things—good things of the table, especially ale and French wine. Whenever silver jingles in his pocket, he prefers the ease of a coach to the exertion inseparable from walking. He requires a fairly large income merely to provide him the creature comforts he craves. But he is penniless. Hence he avails himself freely of the hospitality and generosity of his friends. They avail themselves gladly and freely of the privilege of supporting him.

Parnell gives him the copy money, which he has received for his "Life of Zoilus"—a sum of £16, 2s., 6d. He is paid £35, 17s., 6d. for the negligible assistance he has rendered Pope in connection with his edition of Shakespeare. William Pulteney, late Secretary of War, takes the poet with him to Aix-La-Chapelle in the summer of 1717. Lord Harcourt invites him out to Cockthorpe in Oxfordshire,

and then has him at Stanton Harcourt. He becomes well known in Court circles. Pope to Swift: "Gay is well at Court, and more than ever in the way of being served . . . Gay dines daily with the maids of honour. . . ."

Then there is Mrs. Howard—extremely fair, with fine light brown hair. She has been married when very young to Charles Howard, third son of Henry, fifth Earl of Suffolk—a wrong-headed, ill-tempered, obstinate, drunken, extravagant, and brutal man. She seeks Gay for comfort and companionship. She finds both. He is friend, adviser, secretary, and major-domo, card partner, shopping assistant, and pet-dog carrier, all in one. Mr. Howard has been gratefully relieved of all the disagreeable duties incumbent upon a husband. But the lady is good-hearted, charming, agreeable, and Gay delights to spend his time with her. In truth, mornings, afternoons, and evenings find him at her abode.

She is a busy lady. She lives in a continual bustle, literally without having anything to do. But the morning levée is given almost entirely to ex-

clusive chats with her friend Gay. Mantua makers, milliners, hairdressers, dressmakers, are quickly despatched. The thousand patterns of silks that have been brought her to make choice—such colors have not yet appeared in a rainbow—are promptly pushed aside. On the other hand, the French hairdresser, most sought after of his tribe, arrives at eleven, with a servant and a number of boxes. He cannot be dismissed summarily. In a moment my Lady is enveloped in a cloud of powder, while she chats vivaciously with Gay.

—"What are you doing? I do not mean to be powdered."—"Not powdered? Why you would not be so barbarous as to appear without it. It positively is not decent."—"I thought you used to admire the colour of my hair. How often have you praised its glossy hue, and called me your nut-brown maid?"—"I can bear to see a woman without powder in the summer, but now . . ."

—"Vous êtes finie, madame, au dernier goût." Mrs. Howard advances to the mirror. A few turns of her petty head. A dainty touch here and there. An inquiring look at Gay. He nods a smiling

approval. What with curls, flowers, ribbands, feathers, lace, jewels, fruit, and ten thousand other things, her head is at least, from one side to the other, full half an ell wide. The Frenchman wants half a guinea for the dressing, and four guineas for the feathers, pins, wools, false curls, chignon toque, pomades, flowers, wax fruit, ribbands, etc. He is paid, and bows himself out of the room.

An audible sigh from Gay. My Lady looks at him and laughs prettily.—"Now tell me—this club of Fat Men—have you joined?"—"Oh, yes! a respected member."

And so the poet goes into a long discourse on the various clubs of London. The Club of Fat Men—in a room with two doors. "There are restrictions"—a candidate who can make his way through the small door is unqualified for membership. But if he sticks, the folding doors are immediately thrown open. He is saluted as a brother. "Do you know, I had difficulty in entering even then?"

Another club has sprung up in opposition—the Scarecrows and Skeletons. Then there is the Club of Ugly Faces—of those to whom nature has been

unkind; the Club of Broken Shopkeepers, at the sign of Tumbledown Dick near the Mint, who by turns anathematize their creditors and bewail their misfortunes; the Atheistical Club—"Yes, my Lady, whimsical physicians, half-learned gentlemen, crack-brained philosophers, and conceited libertines"; the Beaux' Club—a lady's lap-dog club. —"Where do they meet? At a tavern near Covent Garden. They compare dresses and invent new fashions. I do not fancy these fantastical idols."

A Wrangling Club, a Pandemonium Club, a Small Coalman's Music Club in Clerkenwell, and a thousand others. And the Lying Club at Bell Tavern in Westminster—"I have their code of rules," and the poet digs down into his pocket and draws up a crumpled piece of paper. " 'Whoever shall presume to speak a word of truth between the hours of six and seven within the worshipful society, without first saying, with an audible voice—"By your leave, Sir Harry," shall for such offence forfeit one gallon of such wine as the Chairman shall think fit.' Oh, yes! I forget—there is the Twopenny Club for the poorer classes. I remem-

ber their rules. 'If a member swears or curses, his neighbour may give him a kick upon the shins. If any member tells stories in the Club that are not true, he shall forfeit for every third lie one half penny. And if any member brings his wife into the Club, he shall pay for whatever she smokes or drinks.' "

My Lady smiles—and fatty wrinkles wink roguishly under Gay's laughing eyes.

Delightful mornings! But the Pulteneys swoop down and take our poet with them for a second time to the Continent. Mr. Pulteney is munificent. Besides, he excels in conversation, without seeking to soliloquize or monopolize. He has a keen, incisive tongue. His enemies fear it more than another man's sword. He has one passion, a love of the classics. It is a sign that he has lost his appetite when he desists from Greek and punning. As for his wife, Anna Maria, daughter of a wealthy glass manufacturer, she has no one good, agreeable, or amiable quality, but beauty. They both love money, yet are singularly lavish in entertaining their friend. "I must give you an ac-

count of very bad physicians, and of a fever which I had at Spa, that confined me for a month," in a letter to Pope. "I am rambling from place to place. In about a month I hope to be at Paris, and in the next month to be in England, and the next minute to see you."

In the meantime the poet is active in arranging for the publication of his collected works in two large quarto volumes. The list of subscribers is a large and representative one—Lord Burlington (generous Burlington) and the Duke of Chandos both take fifty copies of the work. Pulteney takes twenty-five. Lord Bathurst, Lord Warwick, Pelham, and Craggs each has his name down for ten copies. The financial result of the venture is most gratifying. Gay makes a thousand pounds or more.

Yet let not me of grievances complain,
Who (though the meanest of the Muse's train)
Can boast subscriptions to my humble lays,
And mingle profit with my little praise.

CHAPTER VII

South Sea Bubble

WHAT is to be done with a thousand pounds? Gay has not the slightest idea. He must make up his mind. It is disconcerting for him to have to make up his mind. Others before have done it for him. Doctor Arbuthnot advises him to put his faith in Providence and live upon the capital. Pope and Swift urge the purchase of an annuity. Erasmus Lewis suggests an investment in the funds. Gay is bewildered. He does none of those things. Just when he is confronted with the ordeal of making up his mind, Pope's friend, James Craggs, the younger ("Bold generous Craggs, whose heart was ne'er disguised"), makes him a present of some stock of the South Sea Company. It will rise in value. Here is a chance, a chance dear to the heart of our hunter after sinecures and preferment. He is to get something for nothing, or next to nothing. He converts every farthing of cash that

he possesses into South Sea Stock. All goes well.

The state has decided to sell certain trading monopolies in return for a sum of money to be devoted to a reduction of the national debt. The South Sea Company, formed in 1711, has been granted a monopoly of the British trade with South America and the Pacific Islands, the riches of which are popularly regarded as illimitable. Its promoters are mainly wealthy merchants. But the celebrated Horley, the Earl of Oxford, is an originator and a large investor. The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Aislabie), Lord Sunderland, and the two Craggses support the scheme. The Company takes over nearly ten million pounds of the national debt at six per cent. It receives eight thousand pounds a year for the expenses of the arrangement. The Company continues to thrive. It is the special pride of Tories, who regard it as a rival to the Whig institution, the Bank of England.

Towards the end of 1719, the Company puts before the Government a more ambitious scheme. In return for further concessions, it will take over

the whole of the national debt. It will pay three and a half million pounds for this privilege. The amount of the debt is large—£51,300,000. The greater part is of terminable annuities, money lent to the state in return for a fixed income for life. The annuitants are to receive interest of five per cent until 1727, and four per cent thereafter. The Government is glad to rid itself of an unpopular and burdensome debt. The Company is eager to shoulder the burden. The advantages hoped for are great. It will persuade the annuitants to exchange their annuities for South Sea Stock. The stock will be issued at a high premium. Thus a large amount of annuities will be purchased and extinguished by the issue of a comparatively small amount of stock. Moreover, the Company is to receive from the Government the sum of one and a half million pounds annually. The Company is jubilant. The Bank of England is seriously alarmed. It offers the Government five millions for the same privilege. But the South Sea Company outbids them with an offer of seven

and a half millions. This is accepted, and the necessary acts of Parliament are passed.

A mania of speculation bursts over the town. Soon the whole nation runs mad over the South Sea boom. The gilded bait is swallowed. Fancied Eldorados dazzle the eyes. People who scarcely know where America is, feel nevertheless quite certain of its being strewed with gems and silver and gold. The exploits of Drake are quoted. The dreams of Raleigh are revived. Rumor fans the flame. Spain will cede to England four ports on the coast of Chile and Peru. Where are Chile and Peru? Few know. It doesn't matter. Chile and Peru are enshrined and set under a mist of gold. And six million pounds are as good as subscribed.

The Company sets up a massive house at the northeast corner of Threadneedle Street, which abuts upon Bishopsgate. It is a center of busy interests. The throng of merchants is here. Here are stately porticoes; imposing staircases; offices roomy as state apartments in palaces; huge charts;

dusky maps of Mexico, dim as dreams; soundings of the Bay of Panama; interiors of committee rooms, with venerable faces of beadles and door-keepers; stern directors seated in form at long mahogany tables, supporting massive silver ink-stands—on solemn days, to proclaim a dividend; and open wainscots hung with pictures of deceased sovereigns and princes. It is all imposing. The Company has received the patronage of royalty. The Prince of Wales has been elected governor. Capital has been increased to twelve million pounds. Stock quoted in 1711 at 76 has risen to 106, then slowly to 121, 140, 160, then skyrocketed to 400.

Walpole is a voice crying in the wilderness. He publishes a pamphlet embodying his views. It is entitled, "The South Sea Scheme Considered." All his efforts are useless. No one reads the pamphlet. When he rises in the House of Commons to speak of the South Sea Bill, the members flock into the lobby.

Capital soars up to forty-three million pounds. There is credit for much more. Stocks suddenly go down to 300, then up to 330, down to 290,

280, then up again to 400. South Sea is all the rage and fashion. The ladies sell their jewels to buy stock. It is very unfashionable not to be in South Sea.

France has set the mode in bubble companies. The Mississippi Company, started by John Law, is vastly prosperous. Shares are at a premium. The Rue de Quincampoix, the 'Change Alley of Paris, is daily thronged with excited spectators. Capital stock to the value of five hundred livres changes hands at ten thousand livres. On January 1, 1720, the Mississippi Company declares a dividend of forty per cent. Its stock rises to eighteen thousand livres. Five days later, Law enters the Roman Catholic Church, in order to be eligible for the post of Comptroller General of the French finances. On February 23, 1720, he fulfills his dream of uniting his company with the Banque Royale. The English papers sneer at him. He has put on a sword, killed a beau or two in a duel, got into Newgate, been condemned to hang, broken prison, escaped over to France, set up a Mississippi bubble, and is now a great man and the rage of France. The

sneer is withered on the English people. The effect of his boom sends South Sea Stock still higher.

Extravagant rumors are circulated. Spain will allow England free trade to all South American colonies. The rich produce of the mines of Potosi-La-Paz is to be brought to England. Silver will be as plentiful as iron. England will supply cotton and woolen goods to the dwellers of Mexico. In payment they will empty their gold mines. The Company will be the richest in the world. An issue of two and a quarter million pounds is swallowed up, and another million is taken.

In the meantime a hundred other bubble companies, encouraged by the success of the South Sea Scheme, have sprung up. There are promising schemes for developing the national fisheries, for making English china, for cleansing the streets, for supplying water to the metropolis, for making Joppa and Castile soap, for insuring horses against natural death, for introducing the breed of asses; besides such chimerical objects as discovering the secret of perpetual motion, casting nativities, extracting butter from beechnuts, oil from poppies, silver from iron, erecting salt pans in

Holy Island, and discovering the Land of Ophir. These various companies are capitalized for three hundred million pounds. The shares of all are at a premium.

News from Paris. Mississippi stock has sunk from 1800 to 400. Law has fled. The Banque Royale has suspended payment. Ruin is widespread. Law's house is attached. "Renegade scoundrel"—the English retort.

South Sea is still firm. Optimism is prevalent. Law and France and the Mississippi bubble are forgotten in the mad rush to buy South Sea. No one is satisfied with exorbitant gains. Everyone thirsts for more. All this is built upon a foundation of paper credit supported by imagination—a vast imagination. If the fatal hour comes, no earthquake can produce a more terrible convulsion.

Inevitably the price must settle in ratio to the earning powers of the company. On May 1, 1720, it is 550. By the end of the month it is 600. June 2 finds it at 890. Then suddenly it seems there are all sellers and no buyers. Down the stock goes to 640. It recovers at 770, and closes four days later at 820. Directors send agents into 'Change Alley

to buy, buy, buy, until they stay the slump. Confidence is restored. A third subscription of one million pounds is enlarged to four millions. The rage for stock continues. At the end of June it is at 920. The advanced prices of all South Sea stock now amounts to five hundred million pounds sterling—five times as much as the current cash of all Europe, and double the value of all the immovable property of the nation.

Stock is quoted in July at 1000. Wise men sell, fools hold on. John Gay holds on to his. He has been bitten, and burns with the fever. If he sells, he will realize twenty thousand pounds. Friends implore him. He is obdurate. He dreams of dignity, splendor. He cannot bear to obstruct his own fortune. Penniless a few months before, he cannot bring himself to be satisfied with a thousand pounds a year. Friends beg him to sell so much as will produce even a hundred pounds a year. Fenton argues: "It will make you sure of a clean shirt and a shoulder of mutton every day." Gay is not to be moved. A great capitalist he is to be—a great capitalist or nothing.

While some build castles in the air,
Directors build them in the sea,
Subscribers plainly see them there,
For fools will see as wise men please.

Our poet has succumbed to the greed for gain. He becomes an habitué of Garraway's Coffee House in 'Change Alley—a broad, well-paved place, the great stock market of Europe. For variety he takes a turn now and then into Robin's or Jonathan's in the same Alley. Garraway's draws the people of quality who have business in the city, and wealthy citizens. The poet is at home here amongst advisers, well wishers, friends. Besides, he has himself become a man of considerable wealth. When he feels the urge, he strolls importantly into Robin's and listens to the talk of foreign bankers. In the afternoons, when he desires to ascertain the quotations on South Sea, he enters Jonathan's, takes a seat at the table, orders his pipe and bowl of coffee, and listens attentively to the noise and bustle of the buyers and sellers of stock.

While the stock jobbers are talking, the coffee boys are crying, "Fresh coffee, gentlemen, fresh

coffee! Bohea tea, gentlemen!" At a table a few yards from the poet sit a couple of men engaged in the discussion of a newly started scheme. Plunging his hand impatiently under the deep, silver-buttoned flap of his blue frock coat and drawing out a paper, the more business-like looking of the pair commences eagerly to read out figures intended to convince the listener. The latter takes a jeweled snuff-box from the pocket of his green brocade waistcoat, taps the lid, enjoys a pinch of perfumed Turkish, and leans back lazily in his chair. Somewhat farther off, standing in the middle of the room, is a keen-eyed lawyer, counting on his fingers the probable results of a speculation in human hair. A fresh-colored farmer from St. Albans, on whose boots the mud of the cattle market has not yet dried, listens with a face of stolid avarice. He is clutching the stag-horn handle of his thonged whip as vigorously as if it were the wealth he covets. There strides a Non-conformist divine with South Sea scheme in every line of his face, greedy for the gold that perishes. Here a bishop, whose truer place is Garraway's, edges his cassock through the

mauling crowd. Sturdy sea captains, whose manners smack of blustering breezes and who hail their acquaintances as if through a speaking trumpet in a storm; footmen, porters, tradesmen; hacks from Grub Street, who are wont to borrow an ink bottle and just one sheet of paper at the bar of the Black Swan in St. Martin's Lane, all pass and repass with continuous change and murmur before Gay's eyes during the quarter of an hour that he sits there, while the coffee boys are crying, "Fresh coffee, fresh coffee, gentlemen! Bohea tea, fresh coffee, gentlemen!"

The whole nation is infected with the spirit of stock jobbing. All distinctions of party, religion, sex, character, and circumstance are swallowed up. 'Change Alley is filled with a strange concourse of statesmen, clergymen, churchmen, dissenters, Whigs, Tories, physicians, lawyers, tradesmen, and even women.

The Stars and Garters did appear
Among the meaner rabble;
To buy and sell, to see and hear
The Jews and Gentile squabble,

The greatest ladies thither came,
And plied in chariots daily,
Or pawned their jewels for a sum
To venture in the Alley.

Daily conversation turns only on stocks. Even the scandal of the tea table is forgotten. What is strange and wonderful, even my Lady's dress, diamond shoe buckles, and garters are neglected. Smocks, boots, watches, rings, swords, pistols, jewels, are pawned to raise money to purchase.

Well-intentioned folk bleat their warnings. Newspapers point out the folly of it all. The first may as well keep their breath to cool their porridge, the second no one reads—no one cares about them. A new aristocracy is arisen, an aristocracy of humble origin but possessed of vast wealth. Now riches begin to jostle the aristocrats of birth.

The bubble is full blown. It begins to quiver and shake. Interest has not been paid on their money. Stocks have failed to produce dividends. Government annuitants begin to express dissatisfaction. The directors are known to have sold out. Stock at 1000 falls to 750. By September 13 it is 590.

Day after day it descends until it is as low as 400. On October 3 it is 280. Down, down, down to 240, 200, 135. The Bank of England's help is of no avail. South Sea Bonds are in discredit.

The outcry is terrible. The directors are afraid to show themselves out of doors. Pamphlets summarizing their iniquities are circulated. Newspapers print articles demanding their heads. Ballads full of vituperation are written about them. Cartoons hot from the press hold them up to obloquy. Indeed, the general feeling is such that it becomes the practice among ladies who at a card table turn up a knave, to cry "There's a director for you!"

The people are undone. Many of the first rank are wounded in their estates beyond retrieve. The Duke of Wharton loses a hundred and twenty thousand pounds. Sir Justus Beck's debt is three hundred and forty thousand. The Duke of Portland is so hard hit that he is reduced to soliciting the post of Captain General of Jamaica.

Thousands are reduced to beggary. Tradesmen shut up shop. Many are thrown into prison for

debt, and soak their bread in bitter tears. An eminent physician learns that he has lost five thousand guineas and says airily, "Why, 'tis but going up five thousand flights of stairs more." But few can afford to be so philosophical. John Gay cannot. Profit and principal have both been lost. He is reduced to beggary. It is a severe blow. The poet seeks comfort in upbraiding himself:

Why did 'Change Alley waste thy precious hours,
Among the fools who gap'd for golden showers?
No wonder if we found some poets there,
Who live on fancy, and can feed on air;
No wonder they were caught by South Sea schemes,
Who ne'er enjoy'd a guinea but in dreams;
No wonder they their third subscription sold,
For millions of imaginary gold . . .

Gay's friends, on the other hand, are not angry at him. They look upon him as a spoilt child who has tried to get over a hedge and scratched himself. All the chastisement he draws from friend Pope is, "You are negligent, and a bad manager."

CHAPTER VIII

Commissioner of the State Lottery

GAY's friends put their heads together. They must find something for him. He is not easy to deal with. It is difficult to make him listen to reason. He believes that it is his just due to receive something for nothing. He has been secretary to Lord Claredon's brief mission to Hanover; why has not diplomacy something to offer him? The Princess of Wales has asked for a copy of a set of his verses; is there no place for him at Court? He has praised members of the royal family in verse; is there somewhere, somehow, a sinecure in the royal household for him? Cannot Mrs. Howard do something in his interest? Cannot the friends of Pope do aught to secure that little post? Or Lord Burlington, generous Burlington, or Lord Bathurst, or William Pulteney, or some one of the rest?

Gay becomes petulant, querulous. But still his

friends feed him, keep him, pet him, and make their friends and their friends' friends do likewise. A delightful, whimsical, helpless creature, leaning upon all who are stronger. And each one on whom he leans, loves him to his dying day.

His health gives way. Never robust, his bitter disappointment has weakened him greatly. The Duchess of Queensberry therefore takes him along to Bath in the early autumn of 1721. In the following year he is again ill, and goes again to recuperate at the Somersetshire watering place. John Gay to Dean Swift, December 22, 1722: "I think of you very often; nobody wishes you better, or longs more to see you . . . I was there [at Bath] for near eleven weeks for a colic that I have been troubled with of late; but have not found all the benefit I expected . . . I lodge at present at Burlington House, and have received many civilities from many great men, but very few real benefits. They wonder at each other for not providing for me, and I wonder at them all. Experience has given me some knowledge of them, so that I can say that it is not in their power to disappoint me."

This is certainly ungrateful of Gay. But he is of a sanguine disposition, easily elated and as easily depressed. He mistakes the usual civilities of persons of distinction for offers of assistance, and argues from the common promises of a Court certain preferment. Accordingly he suffers from mortification, about which he is inclined to discourse. Even Pope gently chides him: "I wish you joy on the birth of the young Prince [George William], because he is the only Prince we have from whom you have had no expectations and no disappointments."

Dean Swift is solicitous of the poet's health and has a word of advice: "Although I care not to talk to you as a divine, yet I hope you have not been the author of your colic. Do you drink bad wine or keep bad company? I am heartily sorry you have any dealings with that ugly distemper, and I believe our friend Arbuthnot will recommend you to temperance and exercise . . . I have been considering why poets have such ill success in making their court, since they are allowed to be the greatest and best of all flatterers. The defect is, that they flatter only in print or in writing, but not by word of

mouth; they will give things under their hand, which they make a conscience of speaking. Besides, they are too libertine to haunt antechambers, too poor to bribe porters and footmen, and too proud to cringe to second-hand favourites in a great family. . . . I am of opinion, if you will not be offended, that the surest course would be to get your friend [Lord Burlington], who lodgeth in your house, to recommend you to the next Chief Governor who comes over here, for a good civil employment, or to be one of his secretaries. The wine is good and reasonable; you may dine twice a week at the Deanery House; there is a set of company in this town sufficient for one man; folks will admire you, because they have read you, and read of you; and a good employment will make you live tolerably in London, or sumptuously here; or if you divide between both places, it will be for your health . . . I wish I could do more than say I love you. I left you in a good way both for the late Court and the successors; and by the force of too much honesty, or too little sublunary wisdom, you fell between two stools. Take care of

your health and money—be less modest, and more active; or else turn parson, and get a bishoprick here. Would to God they would send us as good ones from your side."

Gay's friends, who have been on the lookout to help him, at last meet with some small measure of success. He is appointed Commissioner of the State Lottery, worth a hundred and fifty pounds a year. "And I am not without hopes that I have friends that will think of some better and more certain provision for me"—in a letter to Swift.

In addition to this post, the Earl of Lincoln is persuaded to give him an apartment in Whitehall. John Gay to Dean Swift, February 3, 1723—our poet is in a gay mood: "As for the reigning amusements of the town, it is entirely music; real fiddles, bass-viols, and hautboys, not poetical harps, lyres, and reeds. There's nobody allowed to say, I sing, but an eunuch or an Italian woman. Everybody is grown now as great a judge of music as they were in your time of poetry; and folks that could not distinguish one tune from another now daily dispute about the different styles of Handel, Bonon-

cini, and Attilio. People have now forgot Homer and Virgil and Cæsar, or at least they have lost their ranks. For in London and Westminster, in all polite conversations, Senesino is daily voted to be the greatest man that ever lived. . . . Mr. Congreve I see often. He always mentions you with the strongest expressions of esteem and friendship. He labours still under the same affliction as to his sight and gout; but in his intervals of health, he has not lost anything of his cheerful temper. I passed all last season with him at Bath [needless to say, at Congreve's expense], and I have great reason to value myself upon his friendship, for I am sure he sincerely wishes me well. Pope has just now embarked himself in another great undertaking as an author, for of late, he has talked only as a gardener. He has engaged to translate the Odyssey in three years, I believe rather out of a prospect of gain than inclination, for I am persuaded he bore his part in the loss of the South Sea. I supped about a fortnight ago with Lord Bathurst and Lewis at Doctor Arbuthnot's."

During the summer of 1723, Gay, still troubled

with the colic, goes to Tunbridge Wells. He carries on a vigorous correspondence with Mrs. Howard. The friends discuss love, friendship, sincerity, Court creed and courtiers, all in a carefree, delightful way. She chides her friend: "Take my word for it, many a fine lady has gone there to drink the waters without being sick, and many a man has complained of the loss of his heart who has had it in his own possession. I desire you will keep yours."

To which our poet replies that he has fallen passionately in love with a young lady, Mary Jennings, seventeen, with thirty thousand pounds. Other ladies ask for an equipage, a title, a husband, or a *matadore*. This one places all her wishes in a pot of good ale. "When her friends, for the sake of her shape and complexion, would dissuade her from it, she answers with the truest sincerity, that by the loss of shape and complexion, she can only lose a husband, but that ale is her passion. Her shape is not very unlike a barrel, and I would describe her eyes, if I could look over the agreeable swellings of her cheeks, in which the rose predominates; nor can I perceive the least of the lily

in her whole countenance. You see what thirty thousand pounds can do, for without that I could never have discovered all these agreeable particularities. In short, she is the ortolan, or rather wheat ear, of the place, for she is entirely a lump of fat; and the form of the universe itself is scarce more beautiful, for her figure is almost circular."

This ortolan, or wheat ear, or lump of fat, is unceremoniously dropped by the wayside, as our poet launches into an attack on the hypocrisy of statesmen and courtiers. "As men of dignity believe one thing one day and another the next, so you must daily change your faith and opinion; therefore the mood to please these wonderful and mighty men is never to declare in the morning what you believe, until your friend has declared what he believes—for one mistake this way is utter destruction. I hope these few reflections will convince you that I know something of the art of pleasing great men. I cannot wonder that great men require all this from their creatures, since most of them have practised it themselves, or else they had never arrived at their dignitaries."

The poet runs back to pick up Miss Jennings. "This lady must be born to be a parson's wife, and I never will think of marrying her till I have preached my first sermon. She was last night at a private ball—so private that not one man knew it till it was over. . . . I fancy I shall not stay here much longer, though what will become of me I know not, for I have not, and fear never shall have, a will of my own."

CHAPTER IX

"The Captives"

The Princess of Wales and her ladies, all in expectation, are seated in the blue room. They are awaiting John Gay, who is to read his new play, "The Captives." The poet opens the door, advances with reverence too great for any other attention, stumbles at a stool, and, falling forward, throws down a weighty Japanese screen. The Princess starts, the ladies scream. And poor Gay, after all the disturbance, has still to read his play.

"The Captives" is produced at Drury Lane Theatre on January 15, 1724. It runs for nine nights and receives great applause. But it has no success. On the fifth night Gay gives thirty guineas to have it performed. The play is published. Gay prefaces it with a dedication to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. "The honour I received from your Royal Highness in being permitted to read this play to you before it was acted

made me more happy than any other success that could have happened to me. If it had the good fortune to gain your Royal Highness's approbation, I have often been reflecting to what to impute it, and I think it must have been the catastrophe of the fall, the rewarding of virtue, and the relieving the distressed."

The year 1724 is spent in the arduous task of eating much, drinking more, and writing nothing. Occasionally he rouses himself to write a letter. "Every post gives me fresh mortification, for I am forgot by everybody. I shall return to London with Lord Scarborough, who hath not as yet fixed his time of leaving the Bath."

The poet goes frequently to Court. Encouraged by the friendly interest displayed by the Princess of Wales, he is still obsessed with his desire for a place. Swift to Pope, September 29, 1725: "I hear nothing of our friend Gay, but I find the Court keep him at hard meat. I advised him to come over here with a Lord Lieutenant." To which Pope replies, "Our friend Gay is used as the friends of Tories are by Whigs, and generally by Tories too."

Dean Swift has long been in correspondence with Gay but they have not met. Swift has often in his mind a visit to London. "What can be the design of your letter but malice, to wake me out of a scurvy sleep, which, however, is better than none! I am towards nine years older since I left you, yet that is the least of my alterations; my business, my diversions, my conversations, are all entirely changed for the worse, and so are my studies and my amusements in writing; yet after all, this humdrum way of life might be passable enough, if you would let me alone. I shall not be able to relish my wine, my parsons, my horses, nor my garden, for three months, until the spirit you have raised shall be dispossessed. I have sometimes wondered that I have not visited you, but I have been stopped by too many reasons, besides years and laziness, and yet these are very good ones. Besides, what a figure should I make in London, while my friends are in poverty, exile, distress, or imprisonment, and my enemies with rods of iron."

At last, however, in March, 1726, Dean Swift does come to London. He is the guest of Gay—"my

landlord at Whitehall," he dubs his friend—"who treats me with kindness, and domesticity, and says that he is laying in a double stock of wine." Like the rest, Swift comes to love Gay. Gay is no whit less attracted to the great man. The Dean is introduced to Mrs. Howard. She too wishes to entertain him. But the Dean makes one condition: "I hope you will get your house and wine ready, to which Mr. Gay and I are to have access when you are at Court, for as to Mr. Pope, he is not worth considering on such occasions."

CHAPTER X

A Day at Twickenham

A SPIDER figure in black, with pale, thin-drawn features, fine, eager black eyes under a black wig, and legs like mere drumsticks, despite their coverings of three stockings, is directing his friends around his five-acre garden at Twickenham. He has a melodious voice.

The Thames is glittering beneath an unclouded sun. The gardens are offering their first nosegays. Trees are stretching their arms to meet each other. There are no blue hills, no gleaming lakes, no tumbling waterfalls. Up the lawn, which slopes down to the placid river, stands a small house paved with stone, and having two small parlors on each side. Below, the quiet Thames floats by.

Grove nods at grove. Each alley has a brother. Mock classical temples, obelisks, small mounts, are erected judiciously at the end of each vista. There are also an orangery, a garden house, and a kitchen

garden. Five acres have been twisted and twirled and rimed and harmonized till they appear as two or three sweet little lawns opening and reopening beyond one another. The whole is surrounded with thick, impenetrable woods.

There is a grotto, a short tunnel under the high road, connecting the grounds with the lawn sloping to the river. Mr. Pope waxes enthusiastic. Would his friends like to see it? All nod assent. All except one, a tall man with a slouch in his walk, olive-skinned, with thick lips, black eyes, and high, retreating forehead. He is Doctor Arbuthnot, king of inattention, one of the three Yahoos—the others being Dean Swift and Pope.

The friends follow close behind Mr. Pope. There is an Anglican clergyman of middle height, upright, robust. He wears a cassock and gown with wide puffed pudding sleeves, and his head is surmounted by an enormous periwig. He has keen eyes, a scowling brow, and a savage curl of the lip. His voice is strong, his language incisive, his manner dictatorial. It is none other than the pugnacious, uncompromising Dean of Saint Patrick's, a figure

tragic, fierce, proud. He is talking to Mrs. Howard. He calls himself her master, and corrects her when she speaks bad English or does not pronounce her words distinctly.

Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, with almond eyes, pointed nose and fat body, walks in front. Gay ambles at his side. A pleasant face, the pleasantest, perhaps, of all—adorned neither with hat nor periwig. And he is laughing over his shoulder with an honest, boyish glee. So kind, so gentle, so jocular, so delightfully brisk at times, so dismally woebegone at others. He walks ahead, then runs back, and sports, and chatters, and capers around Pope.

The grotto is reached. Mr. Pope is cicerone. "From the river Thames you see through my arch up a walk of the wilderness, to a kind of open temple, wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner. From that distance under the temple you look down through a sloping arcade of trees, and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing as through a perspective glass. When you

shut the door"—and Mr. Pope shuts the door—"this grotto becomes on the instant, from a luminous room, a camera obscura. As you see, these walls reflect all objects of the river, hills, woods, and boats."—The Dean is getting restless.—"When you have a mind to light it up"—and Mr. Pope lights it up—"it affords a very different scene. It glitters with rays reflected from bits of looking glass in angular forms. These ores, spars, gems, marble, corals—Doctor Borlase, the Cornish antiquary, and Mr. Allen of Bath, and Mr. Cambridge, and Sir Hans Sloane gave them to me. Then there are connected to this grotto"—(Gay sighs; he is hungry for the potted lamphreys in a silver saucepan, Pope's favorite dish, and a favorite of his, too, which the poet has promised him)—"two porches, one towards the river, of smooth stones, full of light and open; the other towards the garden, shadowed with trees, rough with shells, flints, and iron ore. The bottom is paved with simple pebble. Last of all, there is a spring of clearest water falling in a perpetual rill that echoes

through the cavern, and . . .” But Mr. Pope has seen the woeful face of his friend Gay and the savage scowl of the Dean. “Let us dine.”

The Dean is curt: “Better fitted for frogs than for philosophers.”

CHAPTER XI

Preferment

"Gay is writing tales for Prince William," Pope informs Swift in a letter of December, 1725. "Mr. Philips will take this very ill for two reasons, one that he thinks all childish things belong to him, and the other because he will take it ill to be taught that one may write things to a child without being childish."

Gay is, according to the habit of the man, not to be hurried. He has been taken up by the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, especially by the Duchess. They treat him as a sort of pet lap dog. "Since I wrote last," Gay tells Swift, September 16, 1726, "I have been always upon the ramble. I have been in Oxfordshire with the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, and at Petersham, and wheresoever they would carry me; but as they will go to Wiltshire without me on Tuesday next, for two or three months, I believe I shall then have

finished my travels for this year, and shall go no further from London than now and then to Twickenham."

It is well that Gay remains in London, else his "Fables" will never appear. There is another delay. "I have of late been very much out of order with a slight fever, which I am not yet quite free from"—to Swift, October, 1726. "If the engravers keep their word with me, I shall be able to publish my poems soon after Christmas." But of course the engravers do not keep their word. Swift, a more energetic person, grows fractious. "How comes Gay to be so tedious? Another man can publish fifty thousand lies sooner than he can publish fifty Fables." Still more delays. "My Fables are printed, but I cannot get my plates finished. I expect nothing, and am likely to get nothing."

At last, in the spring of 1727, the long-awaited volume appears. It is dedicated to William, Duke of Cumberland. Gay expects some reward for this courtier-like attention to the son of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Her Royal Highness drops the remark that she shall "take up the hare"—an allu-

sion to the Fable of "The Hare and Many Friends."

> A Hare who, in a civil way,
> Comply'd with ev'rything, like Gay,
> Was known by all the bestial train,
> Who haunt the wood, or graze the plain:
> Her care was, never to offend,
> And ev'ry creature was her friend.

On June 12, 1727, George I dies. The Prince and Princess of Wales ascend the throne. Gay is jubilant. He feels sure that at last the hour has struck. His first published epistle has been addressed to the Princess. Both their Royal Highnesses have patronized "The What D'Ye Call It," and "The Captives." He has written Fables for the Duke of Cumberland. Moreover, Mrs. Howard is his dear friend—and the mistress of the newly crowned King George II. Has not the King built Marble Hill for her? She will influence him.

The long-awaited reward comes at last. Like many long-awaited things, it causes grievous disappointment. Gay is asked to become gentleman usher to the little Princess Louisa, then two years

old. The salary is to be two hundred pounds a year. But our poet's vanity is wounded. He declines the offer without hesitation. To Dean Swift: "So now all my expectations are vanished, and I have no prospect but in depending wholly upon myself and my own conduct. As I am used to disappointments, I can bear them, but as I can have no more hopes, I can no more be disappointed, so that I am in a blessed condition."

Pope takes the matter calmly. "I have many years ago magnified, in my own mind, and repeated to you, a ninth beatitude, added to the eighth in the Scripture—'Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.' I could find in my heart to congratulate you on this happy dismission from all Court dependence. I dare say I shall find you the better and the honester man for it many years hence; very probably the healthfuller, and the cheerfuller in the bargain. You are happily rid of many cursed ceremonies, as well as of many ill and vicious habits, of which few or no men escape the infection, who are hackneyed and trammelled in the ways of a Court. Princes, indeed,

and peers (the lackies of Princes), and ladies (the fools of peers) will smile on you the less; but men of worth and real friends will look on you the better. There is a thing, the only thing which Kings and Queens cannot give you, for they have it not to give—liberty, which is worth all they have, and which as yet Englishmen need not ask from their hands. You will enjoy that, and your own integrity, and the satisfactory consciousness of having not merited such graces from Court as are bestowed only on the mean, servile, flattering, interested, and undeserving. The only steps to the favour of the great are such complacencies, such compliances, such distant decorums, as delude them in their vanities, or engage them in their passions. He is their greatest favourite who is the falsest; and when a man by such vile graduations arrives at the height of grandeur and power, he is then at best but in a circumstance to be hated, and in a condition to be hanged for serving their ends. So many a minister has found it.

"I can only add a plain uncourtly speech," Pope writes again ten days later. "While you are no-

body's servant, you may be anybody's friend, and as such, I embrace you in all conditions of life. While I have a shilling, you shall have six pence, nay eight pence, if I can continue to live upon a groat."

But if Pope is calm, Swift is irate, losing his temper, and writing as if voluntary attendance at Court has made it obligatory upon the Queen to provide for the courtier. "You have a firm enemy in the Ministry. God forgive him, but not till he puts himself in a state to be forgiven"—which state is largely to be determined by the size of the sinecure provided for our poet. "I have known Courts these thirty-six years, and know they differ, but in some things they are extremely constant. First, in the trite old maxim of a Minister's never forgiving those he hath injured. Secondly, in the insincerity of those who would be thought the best friends. Thirdly, in the love of fawning, cringing, and tale bearing. Fourthly, in sacrificing those whom we really wish well, to a point of interest, or intrigue. Fifthly, in keeping everything worth taking, for those who can do service or disservice.

. . . To expose vice, and make people laugh with innocence, does more public service than all the Ministers of state from Adam to Walpole—and so adieu."

The Dean cannot forgive the Court for the offer. He is angry with Mrs. Howard for not exerting her influence to get a better post for her protégé. "I desire my humble service to Lord Oxford, Lord Bathurst, and particularly to Miss Blount, but to no lady at Court." To which Pope replies, "After all, that lady means to do good, and does no harm, which is a vast deal for a courtier."

Swift takes up his mighty pen in Gay's defense.

How could you, Gay, disgrace the Muse's train,
To serve a tasteless Court twelve years in vain!—
Say, had the Court no better place to choose
For thee, than make a dry nurse of thy Muse?
How cheaply had thy liberty been sold,
To squire a royal girl of two years old:
In leading-strings her infant steps to guide,
Or with her go-cart amble side by side!

The friends of Gay are unwise in this matter. The poet is already in the enjoyment of a sinecure

of a hundred and fifty pounds a year. He has been offered another of two hundred a year. The post of Gentleman Usher involves no duties, save occasional attendance at Court. To this our poet has shown himself by no means averse. A total gift of three hundred and fifty pounds a year for doing nothing is rather alluring to a man of letters. True, Gay's pride has been wounded. But there is three hundred and fifty pounds to soothe the hurt. The affluent friends who have recommended him to reject the provisions are strangers to want. With unconscious selfishness, they think less of his necessities than of the opportunity of venturing their spleen against the Court.

The relations between Mrs. Howard and Gay are affected not a whit. She is in blissful ignorance of having given offense. She really isn't to blame. She is the mistress of George II, but she takes little from him except snubs and slights. She is sensible, artful, and agreeable, but she has neither sense nor art enough to make the King think her so agreeable as his wife. The Queen avenges herself upon her for the King's infidelity. She humiliates her by

employing her in servile offices about her person. The King is insolent. It happens more often than once that, while the Queen is dressing, he has snatched off the handkerchief, and turning rudely to Mrs. Howard has cried, "Because you have an ugly neck yourself, you hide the Queen's." And so Mrs. Howard is not able to advance her friends.

But there is the villa, Marble Hill, which the King has built for her. It is the only regal present she has taken from him, Marble Hill, with its finely carved mahogany staircase and its rooms of imposing proportions. It cost twelve thousand pounds. The unceremonious way in which one of the King's naval officers felled the trees required for the purpose, off the Bay of Honduras, has very nearly caused a war with Spain. The gardens have been laid out by Mr. Pope. The cellar has been stocked by Dean Swift.

No more the Dean, that grave divine,
Shall keep the key of my no-wine;
My ice-house rob as heretofore,
And steal my artichokes no more;
Poor Patty Blount no more be seen
Bedraggled in my walks so green;

Plump Johnny Gay will now elope,
And here no more will dangle Pope.

Gay has a home here, as well as on the other side of the Thames with the Duchess of Queensberry. A stone bust of the poet is placed over a door leading to two rooms, fitted up with colored glass in the windows. They are "Gay's rooms." They are contrived in such a manner that he can join the family or not as he pleases.

The friends continue their correspondence on the same lines of intimacy as before. "Tell her Grace of Queensberry I don't think she looked kindly upon me when I saw her last . . . So much for her Grace; now for yourself, John. Your head is your best friend; it could clothe, lodge, and wash you, but you neglect it, and follow that false friend, your heart, which is such a foolish, tender thing that it makes others despise your head that have not half so good a one upon their own shoulders. In short, John, you may be a snail, or a silkworm, but by my consent you shall never be a hare again."

Our poet is not the man to keep his disappointed

feelings to himself. The following copy of verses is handed about in manuscript.

A mother who vast pleasure finds
In forming of the children's minds;
In midst of whom with vast delight
She passes many a winter night—

This happy mother met one day,
A book of fables writ by Gay;
And told her children, here's treasure
A fund of wisdom, and of pleasure.
Such decency! Such elegance!
Such morals! Such exalted sense!
Well has the poet found the art,
To raise the mind, and mend the heart.
Her favourite boy, the author seized,
And as he read, seem'd highly pleas'd;
Delighted read, but scarce was able,
To finish the concluding fable.

"What ails my child?" the mother cies,
"Whose sorrows now have filled your eyes?"
"Oh, dear mamma, can he want friends,
Who writes for such exalted ends? . . .

Mamma, if you were Queen," says he,
"And such a book was writ for me,

I know 'tis so much to your taste
That Gay would keep his coach, at least."

"My child, what you suppose is true,
I see its excellence in you;
Poets whose writings mend the mind,
A noble recompense should find; . . ."

"But, dear mamma, I long to know,
Were that the case, what you'd bestow?"

"What I'd bestow?" says she. "My dear,
At least five hundred pounds a year."

CHAPTER XII

A Newgate Pastoral

"My opera is already finished," Gay writes Swift on October 22, 1727. To which Swift replies, "I am very glad your opera is finished, and hope your friends will join the readers to make it succeed, because you are ill used by others."

The poet shows what he has written to Swift and Pope. They make a few corrections, and give a word or two of advice. Neither is sanguine of its success. Pope to Swift: "John Gay's opera is just on the point of delivery. It may be called, considering its subject, a jail delivery. Mr. Congreve is anxious as to its success, and so am I. Whether it succeeds or not, it will make a great noise, but whether of claps or hisses, I know not. At worst it is in its own nature a thing which he can lose no reputation by, as he lays none upon it."

Congreve remarks that it will either take greatly or be damned confoundedly. The Duke of Queens-

berry says: "This is a very odd thing, Gay. I am satisfied it is either a very good thing or a very bad thing." Colley Cibber and his brother refuse it for Drury Lane. John Rich, who accepts it for his theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields, has grave doubts. Quin has such a poor opinion of it that he refuses the part of Captain Macheath and hands it over to Walker. Gay himself is afflicted with doubts. He prepares for the worst. He affects to regard it as a thing which he can lose no reputation by. Hence, of course, the motto from Martial—"*Nos hæc novimus esse nihil.*"

Swift is more anxious than all. The first suggestions of "The Beggar's Opera" has come from him. To Pope, August 30, 1716 (procrastinating Gay!): "A set of Quaker pastorals might succeed if our friend Gay could fancy it, and I think it a fruitful subject. Pray hear what he says. I believe farther the pastoral ridicule is not exhausted, and that a porter, footman, or chairman's pastoral might do well, or what think you of a Newgate pastoral among the whores and thieves there?"

CHAPTER XIII

The London of "The Beggar's Opera"

It is an exciting London. "I was knocked down by two men at the end of Saint Martin's Lane," says a Mr. Milsom. "They very much abused me, and took my watch and 15d. My watch was offered to sale next day in Piccadilly."

Ave Mary Lane, by Paternoster Row, is a favorite hunting ground. Here, says a respectable doctor, "a man came to the coach, and holding a pistol to my daughter's head, he said, 'Don't be frightened, madam! but, God damn you, if you squawl, I'll shoot you through the head!' "

Thieving, smuggling, highway robbery, are the fashion of the day. There is nothing a man will not steal. William Pinkethman is indicted for stealing ten gallons of beer, ten gallons of ale, and three iron hoops. One steals in the same breath a camblet cloak, a Bermuda hat, forty-three guineas, a pair of stays, a thin flank of beef, and sixty-three

yards of printed lawn. And of course, there are such jolly things to steal—Grogram, and Cambrick'd Head Clothes, and Padusoy Petticoats. How can Harry Fowl be expected not to go off with his fifteen yards of thread satin, his twenty-seven yards of Shagreen, his fifteen yards of Lutestring, his one yard of damask, his hundred and six yards of Mantua, and so on?

Wigs are valuable booty. They cost anywhere from five to fifty guineas. There is a society of wig snatchers. A member of this fraternity walks along the street carrying a huge baker's basket on his head, as is then the custom of the baker. In it he has concealed a small boy. An unsuspecting gentleman suddenly has his wig spirited away by the boy whipping out his hand for the plunder, and never imagines that the thief is the innocent-looking baker's man. When the trick oozes out, the bakers, to preserve their reputation, begin to carry their baskets not on their heads but at their backs.

Punishments for theft are severe. The death penalty is to be paid for stealing a sheep, or a horse, or 40s. from a dwelling house, 5s. from a shop,

or 12 1/2d. from a pocket; while a man may attempt murder, take the life of another, burn a house, commit a highway robbery, and his crime be classed merely as a misdemeanor.

London is a city of the gallows. Enormous crowds press to see the famous highwayman, Jack Shepherd, in jail before he pays the extreme penalty. The keeper makes two hundred pounds for showing him. Doctor Dodd, a clergyman condemned for forgery, is exhibited at two shillings a head for two hours before being taken to the gallows. The criminals are dressed in the best of clothes, with white gloves, and carry a nosegay of flowers. On the day of execution the condemned men, brightly attired, are put into a cart and driven off, loudly cheered by the huge crowd awaiting them.

As clever Tom Clinch, while the rabble was
bawling,
Rode stately through Holborn to die at his calling,
His waistcoat and stockings and breeches were
white,
His cap had a new cherry ribbon to tie 't;

The maids to the doors and the balconies ran,
And said, "Lack-a-day, he's a proper young man!"
And as from the windows the ladies he spied,
Like a beau in a box, he bowed low on each side.

On his arrival at Tyburn, a mere suburb of London, with open fields, the executioner stops the cart under one of the cross beams of the gibbet, and fastens to that ill-favored beam one end of the rope, while the other is round the wretch's neck. This done he gives the horse a lash with his whip. Away goes the cart, and there swings my gentleman kicking in the air. High-ho.

Mr. James Guthrie is the Ordinary at Newgate —a prodigy of smug self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and inhumanity. He fills five long columns with a word for word report of his exhortations to malefactors, and comments critically on their behavior under this ordeal. William Ward, the highwayman of Stepney, shows considerable merit, because "he behav'd always very well," shedding copious tears upon all occasions. Mr. Guthrie likes tears.

Then he gives us a biography of each malefactor. The biographies are curiously alike. Nearly all the

condemned are extremely young, the average age about twenty-two; all, according to Mr. Guthrie, are born of honest parents, and had good education at school in reading, writing, and arithmetic and "other things proper to fit them for business." Alas, they were nearly always of a roving disposition, went to sea, were corrupted in foreign parts, and came home and became highwaymen. William West, for example, who is hanged at the age of sixteen and a half for burglary (of which it appears that he is quite innocent) "was naturally of such a wicked disposition that he was not willing to keep the school or to be learn'd anything that's good; so that from his Infancy he became a meer Black Guard."

A page in italics describes the behavior of the malefactors at the place of execution. At that place John Davis has his reward. The prisoner has tried to escape, with the help of the populace. "The officers brought him back, two or three men holding and pushing him forward into the cart. I desir'd they would allow me to sing and conclude, with recommendary Prayers to God in their last Moment

—just as he was entering upon Eternity. But some of the Officers, who had no regard to the Souls of Men, caus'd the cart to drive off in a hurry. . . ."

Crimes are punishable by other forms than prison and death. There are the stocks, where vagrants and drunkards are securely fastened by the heels until they have repented of their sins. Then there is the ducking-stool, whereon bakers who serve underweight bread, and witches, and scolding women, are seated and ducked three times into the muddy water to cool their choler and heart. (Ah, those were the days!)

> No brawling wives, no furious wenches,
> No fire so hot, but water quenches.

The city abounds with romantic highwaymen. William Gordon is one of this high order. He never maltreats anybody, but rather endears himself to those he robs. Except, perhaps, to the unfortunate Mr. Peters. "Whether it was after I had given him my watch, or before, I cannot be certain, but he snatched off my Hat and Wig. I expostulated

with him on that occasion," says Mr. Peters. "I told him it was very unusual for men of his Profession to take such things, and that it being very cold it might endanger my health." That, however, seems to have been Mr. Gordon's only lapse from the decent customs of his "Profession."

James Whitney and his followers rob a clergyman of ten pounds. The humor seizes them that he should preach them a sermon. The divine rises to the occasion. He takes for his text the word "Theft"—which shows great daring on his part. His discourse ends thus: "Let him that stole, steal no more, or else the letters of my text point to a tragical conclusion—for T take care; H hanging; E ends not; F felony; T at Tyburn." Despite its extreme pointedness, the robbers approve of the sermon, and, declaring that the preacher deserves his fee, present him with ten shillings out of his ten pounds.

Ned Wicks makes a strange proposition to one of his victims, for when he stops Lord Mohun with the usual polite formula of "Damee, stand and deliver," his Lordship replies with such a string of

profanities that Wicks, who is no mean performer in that line himself, is quite taken aback. A man with such a command of language is out of the common run. He is entitled to a highwayman's respect. With a view to ascertaining who is the most proficient in the gentle art of swearing, Wicks proposes they shall have a swearing match for a bet of fifty pounds, Lord Mohun's groom to act as judge. The preliminaries settled, they fall to. For a quarter of an hour they swear in a way that fairly astonishes both. Then the groom is asked who has acquitted himself the best. He gives his vote in favor of the highwayman Wicks, saying, "Why, my Lord, your honour swears as well as ever I heard any gentleman of quality in my life, but, indeed, to give the strange gentleman his due, he has done better than yourself, and had won the wager, if it was for a thousand pounds."

It is an exciting London. Two Doctors of Medicine fall out. They fight at the gates of Gresham College. "Take your life," growls one. "Anything but your physic," mutters the other, as he falls wounded to the ground. A fatal duel is provoked at

the Grecian Coffee House by a dispute over a Greek accent (we hope it was the poorer scholar who was killed). Duels take place in the open street, the ballroom, the pit of a theater, on Wimbledon Common, the Ring at Hyde Park, or in an empty room of a coffee house.

Two journeymen lace weavers quarrel at a public house about the mode of cooking a dish of sprats, one insisting on having them fried, the other on having them boiled. And a sum of three shillings is raised to procure the use of pistols to decide this important issue. The combatants enter the field, accompanied by their seconds. The usual ceremonies are gone through. One party discharges his pistol. The ball takes away part of the sleeve of his antagonist's coat. Like a man of courage, without waiting for the fire to be returned, he makes the best of his way off the field.

Gambling is as fashionable as duelling, and gin drinking as popular as gambling. Whole estates, jewels, valuable possessions, are staked, lost, won, night after night. Betting takes this form: "Fifty guineas that Mlle. —— does not dance at the opera

next winter. Fifty guineas that the Duke of —— dies before half past five this afternoon."

The excuse for intoxication is supposedly the badness of the water. The wells are contaminated by cesspools and graveyards. Ale is good and clean enough, but strong. The laboring men drink little else. Retailers announce that customers can be made drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two pence, and can have straw on which to lie and recover, free.

It is an exciting London. It is also a very dangerous London. Poor protection is afforded by sleepy-headed watchmen who are despatched on their beats at intervals from watch towers or temporary jails built in cylindrical form like modern Martello towers. These officials are recruited from the dregs of the people. The primary qualifications for so responsible a post are advanced age and sheer incapacity. Appareled in thick, heavy greatcoats, and armed with poles, rattles, and lanterns, the watchmen perambulate the streets, crying the hour after the chimes, taking precautions for the prevention of fire, proclaiming tidings of foul or fair weather,

and awakening at daybreak all those who intend to set out on a journey.

At intervals the drowsy citizen will be snatched from the tender embrace of tired nature's sweet restorer by some such cry as, "Pa-a-st eleven o'clock, and a ra-ainy night," or, "Pa-a-st one o'clock, and a sho-o-wery mo-o-orning." Then a lull punctuated presently by loud cries of "Help!" and "Mercy!" A springing of rattles. The savage soul of fight is up. The affrighted listener is told that not many yards from his house door a fierce hand-to-hand conflict is being waged between the aged guardians of the law and some desperate gang of street thieves, or mischief-loving bucks or bloods.

Occasionally one of these poor old men is caught napping in his box at early dawn by a company of fine gentlemen merry with insolence and wine. One of the number instantly suggests the overturning of the box. The resolution is passed unanimously. A heavy push against the shelter, and topsy turvy it goes. Then the gang takes to its heels, leaving the unfortunate tenant of the box to scramble out of it

the best way he can. At other times a watchman will be sent on a wild goose chase by the oft repeated cries of, "Watch—Wa-a-tch," and will wander up hill and down dale, only to discover at the end of his perambulation that he is the victim of a hoax.

These men are pliant instruments of the light-fingered fraternity, whom they allow to commit robberies before their very eyes with perfect impunity. No one has the least confidence in them. They take part in collusions, tricks, compromises, knaveries of all kinds, that they may be well provided for in old age. Their existence is a nuisance and a curse. A watchman never quits his "beat." A person may be robbed, mauled, or murdered by footpads within twelve yards of the boundaries of one parish, yet our watchman will not trouble himself to run to the rescue. And why? For a very good reason. Simply because the victim is being robbed or mauled or murdered in a place outside his jurisdiction.

Houses are difficult to find. There are no numbers. They can only be described as near the "Black

Swan," or at the corner of the "Red Lion," or some such sign. There are few lights. Small tin vessels half filled with whalebone oil of the worst quality, supplied with bits of cotton twisted for wicks, are inadequate for their purpose.

A person stirring after dark engages a torch-bearer or link boy to light him on his way. It is a dangerous proceeding. The members of this profession are hand and glove with footpads and highwaymen. On a signal the boy will extinguish his link and slip away, leaving the terrified fare to the tender mercies of the thieves.

> Prepare for death if ere at night you roam,
> And sign your will before you pass from home;
> Some fiery fop with new commission vain,
> Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man,
> Some foolish drunkard reeling from a feast,
> Provokes a broil, and stabs you for a jest.

The thieves and vagabonds are of no common sort. They have superb literary names, and they give their evidence in simple, vivid prose. Here are a few choice names of the choice variety: Barbara Dewfly; Sarah Laverstitch; Clarety-face

Hannah (a hussy, I need hardly say); Jeremiah Scruby; Zachariah Mines; Thomas Bonnamy; Benedict Duddle, Surgeon; Richard Runt; Sarah Trantum; Susan Marriage; Michael Roop; Matthew Monger; Stephen Triquet; Robert Bugbeard; Philadelphia Allen, etc., etc. (Where are those names gone? Ten years of the Old Bailey of to-day cannot yield such a harvest.)

The indignant testimony of Joana Fermer: "And please your Lordship, I want intule the country upon prevat prassing basiness, and laft the prasner to tack car of my Loadgings till I came back. And because he pleaded poaverty, I taud him he mat mack use of my bad and my room, tho I dauno' gi' him laberty to maddle wi' my geuds that were lock'd up in my chast of drawers in the cloaset, for I had a great paircel of lannen there. But whan I came back it was aw gone! The deel a bit was there laft. Ye Raug you, says I, you ha roab'd me. Madam, says he, I bag your Pairdon, but it was Nasassity that made me do it. Nasassity! ye Raug you, says I, what Nasassity wu' ye ha to tack aw that I had? Cou' no be containted wi' a little?—I

ask'd him what he had done wi' my geuds, and he took a pan and ank and sat down—saw much sould, saw much pawn'd, and saw much gon'd awa!"

Another.—The Court—"Soames is your name? How long have you gone by that name?"

Isabella Eaton—"About a twelvemonth."

The Court—"I think I have tried you here by another name."

Eaton—"Very like you might try me, my Lord, and by another name too, but what if you did? I was innocent, and my jury acquitted me. I never came here for my crimes but for my passions. I keep the Two Blue Posts in the Hay Market."

William Hinge opens his testimony thus: "Hinge is my name; I don't know how you spell it, because I can't read, but it's the same as a Hinge of a door."

Michael Allom privately steals forty-three pairs of stockings. But he has a pleasant childishness of mind.

Prisoner—"I hope they have not made it appear that I stole the stockings."

Court—"Something very like it. The goods were found in your possession."

Prisoner—"I once had the Honour to be call'd an Attorney of the King's Bench. I was sworn in, and I am sure I paid for it; but I have met with Vicissitudes in Life, as any man may—"

Court—"Are you a wholesale dealer in Stockings too? How came you by these goods?"

Prisoner—"Why, there's the mischief of it. 'Tis my unhappiness that I can't prove how I came by them."

"Hussy, you lie!" cries Clarety-face Hannah to a damaging witness. "You are a vile Toad, a vile old Baud. You lie, you lie, you lie. . . ."

CHAPTER XIV

"The Beggar's Opera"

THEATRE ROYAL, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Night of January 29, 1728. A footman dressed in green, with a black hat and a bluff red face, is lolling over his box, and shouting to his brethren on the other side of the house. A pause. He takes a pinch of snuff, adjusts his coxcomb, starts singing an air, stops, sits down, fidgets in his chair, then jumps up to greet another of his brotherhood—this one dressed in blue—who has been sent to display his livery and keep a stage box for her Ladyship.

The pit is gradually being filled by barristers, and students of the Inns of Court, and young merchants well read in plays. The shilling galleries are crowded. The gods there deem it incumbent upon themselves to create as much noise as possible. They manifest their resentment at a footman by an occasional shower of oranges and half-eaten pippins. A mob of butchers, the regular supporters of Lincoln's

Inn Fields, is here to-night. They are out to see their favorite comedian, Spiller, as Mat of the Mint.

The ladies and gentlemen of fashion begin to stroll in. The former come in to show themselves, spread their fans upon the ledges, make curtsy to their acquaintances—"your Ladyship Cardigan—your Ladyship Dysart—your Ladyship Cowper"—then talk and laugh as loud as they are able.

On each side of the stage are seats for the quality. Their presence is so close that they can touch the actors. Some gentlemen are sitting on the stage. There is Sir Robert Fagg, the horse-racing baronet from Kent, and Major Pauncefoot, and Sir Lambton Blackwell and others. Sir Lambton rises and sits down, covers and uncovers his head twenty times before the first act, pulls out his watch, winds it, sets it, displays his silver snuffbox, affects to take snuff, wipes his nose with a perfumed handkerchief, dangles his cane, and adjusts his sword knot, in order to attract attention.

In the stage box on the left is the Duke of Bolton with the nobleman look ("that look which a nobleman should have, rather than what they have generally now"). He is passionately in love with Lavinia Fenton, the Polly of the piece. He is calm and silent—unusually so. On the other side is Anthony Henley, in black, with a red snuffbox in his hand. Lord Gage stands behind him. Next to Henley is Sir Thomas Robinson, tall and thin—"the Petronius of the Age"—in a lavender suit, the waistcoat embroidered with a little silver, ruffles and frills of lace, partridge stockings and gold buckles. Long Sir Thomas, of whom Chesterfield in his last illness is to say in a jesting spirit, "Ah! Sir Thomas, it will be sooner over with me than it would be with you, for I am dying by inches.

The Duke of Argyll, with his star and his animated countenance, walks in. And here comes poor Gay himself, perspiring with trepidation.

There are symptoms of a coming storm. The gallery boys are getting restless. The audience be-

ing not then much acquainted with the nature of operas, expects the usual music before the drawing up of the curtain. Finding themselves (as they imagine) likely to be bilked out of their first and second music, they express great disapprobation. Pit and gallery roar. The quality is disdainfully disinterested.

The noise—hisses, shrieks, cat-calls, shouts—is too much. Gay nervously mops his brow. Jack Hall (Lockit) is sent on to apologize for the omission by explaining that it is a rule to have no music prior to the overture. Jack makes his obeisance with tolerable grace. But he is confounded at the general silence which so suddenly ensues on his appearance. He blunders out, "Ladies and gentlemen, we—er —we beg you'll not call for first and second music —because—er—because you all know that there is never any music at all in an opera." This bull puts the house in good humor and the piece proceeds. "In this kind of drama," remarks the Beggar later, "'tis no matter how absurdly things are brought about."

The scene opens. Peachum is discovered sitting at

a table with a large book of accounts before him. An old woman in gray hobbles across the stage and sings—

Through all the employments of life,
Each neighbor abuses his brother;
Whore and Rogue they call Husband and Wife;
All professions be-rogue one another.
The Priest calls the Lawyer a cheat,
The Lawyer be-knaves the Divine;
And the Statesman, because he's so great,
Thinks his trade as honest as mine.

and on and on.

Pure, sweet, graceful airs; witty, gay, and innocent, wedded to a rakish libretto. Old ballad airs—what joy to hear English music once more! The music of the English soil, so noble, so debonair, so beautiful—music that grows in England like wayside flowers, which the Cavalier soldiers put in their velvet hats, and the soldiers of George fling to the girls they leave behind them. Yet—

The first act has nearly ended. There is silence. Not a hand has moved. Every man seems to compare looks and notes with his neighbor. The gen-

eral opinion is in its favor. Gay is trying to look unexcited and even disinterested. But he is reading most keenly the different signs of doubt and approval.

The fate of the opera is still in the balance. There is a disposition in some to damn it. However, it is saved by the song, "Oh, ponder well! be not severe"; the audience being much affected by the innocent looks of Polly when she comes to those lines, which exhibit at once a painful and ridiculous image:

> Oh, ponder well! be not severe;
> So save a wretched wife!
> For on the rope that hangs my dear
> Depends poor Polly's life.

"It will do—it must do!—I see it in the eyes of them," remarks the Duke of Argyll in a loud voice. He is a playgoer of taste and experience—and a Duke. Gay's friends are heartened. The quality is impressed. The good nature of the audience appears stronger and stronger every set, and ends in a clamor of applause.

Gay's fat face beams all over. There are no cries of "Author! Author!" Gay is corpulent and emotional. He may not go through the ordeal of bowing to the audience without mishap. He is an awkward fellow—

"But hark! who's entering here? I'll run away,
For by the clumsie tread, it should be Gay."

But his friends crowd around him. They bear him triumphant out of the theater. They do not know whether more to wonder at his success or at their own previous apprehensions.

There is a mob at the playhouse door. The road is cluttered up with coaches, sedan chairs, butchers, lawyers, footmen, boys, and brazen hussies. A sharper snatches a cloak off a gentleman's shoulders. The gentleman cries out, "Stop, thief! stop, thief!" and runs after him. The mob follows in pursuit.

"A supper at the King's Head Tavern in the Poultrey!" Cries and shouts of approval. The friends of Gay hurry him along the road in the direction of the appointed place. They reach the

familiar and joyous sign—a large, well-painted rose behind which appears a standing bowl with drinking glasses, and beneath the painting the inscription:

THIS IS
THE ROSE TAVERNE
IN THE POULTREY
kept by
WILLIAM KING
citizen and vintner

This Taverne's like its signe—a lustie Rose,
A sight of Joy that Sweetness doth enclose,
The daintie Flow're wel pictur'd here is seene,
But for its rarest sweetes—come searche within.

The door is banged open. A flood of gold light rushes out into the night. The friends file in. They bow to the barmaid behind the counter. A snug room warmed with brash and faggot. They gather around a long table. The barmaid comes up with her chalk and sponge, the principal badges of her honorable station in life. She is screaming like a peacock against rainy weather. Her bell and her tongue together make such a racket that if half a dozen smithies with their anvils are set at work

beside her, they will signify no more to her clamorous voice than so many lutes to a drum.

"Name, sirs, the wine that most invites your taste. Porter, salep, brandy, rum, Hollands, Dorset beer and Oxford ale, Champagne, Alicant, and Burgundy, Hock, antique, and Lisbon—new or old. Bordeaux—"

—"Bordeaux!"—with a unanimous shout.

She quits the room but soon returns. One hand bears the capacious drinking vessels. The other holds with a secure grasp three bottles (mighty charge!) filled with goodly wine. The frothy juice is poured out. Glasses clash with glasses. "Bordeaux, more Bordeaux! To glorious George—the first, the best!" A pause ensues. "The Queen!"—Marlborough next.—"Bountiful Burlington!"—Ah, well! all the worthies of the British realm.

Then—ahem—each toasts his mistress—fair Cosmelia or Ducibell or Sylvia, comely, with black hair and piercing, jetty eyes; sprightly Celia, Stella, and Elizabeth.

The friends are blithe and jolly now, driving round the cheerful bowl. My Lord Bolingbroke, the next morning, will drive away the effects of

this night's intemperance by binding a wet napkin round his forehead and eyes, and hasten without sleep to his official business. Our friend Gay will boast of a severe headache and lie in bed all day. Doctor Arbuthnot will make his calls at the wrong addresses. But now they drink and sing and make merry.

Fill ev'ry glass, for wine inspires us,
And fires us
With courage, love, and joy;
Women and wine should life employ.
Is there ought else on earth desirous?

Then on to—

If the heart of a man is deprest with cares,
The mist is dispell'd when a woman appears;
Like the notes of a fiddle, she sweetly, sweetly
Raises the spirit, and charms our ears.
Roses and lilies her cheeks disclose,
But her ripe lips are more sweet than those.
Press her,
Caress her,
With blisses
Her kisses
Dissolve us in pleasure and soft repose.

More Bordeaux, and now they reach—with hoarse voices, red eyes, and puffed faces—

There was a swain full fair,
Was tripping it over the grass,
And there he spy'd with her Nut-brown Hair,
A pretty tight Country Lass.
Fair Damsel, says he,
With an Air brisk and free,
Come let us each other know;
She blush'd in his Face,
And reply'd with a Grace,
Pray forbear, Sir,—no, no, no, no.

The Lad being bolder grown,
Endeavour'd to steal a Kiss,
She cry'd, Pish!—let me alone,
But held up her Nose for the Bliss.
And when he begun,
She would never have done,
But unto his lips she did grow,
Near smother'd to Death,
As soon as she 'ad Breath,
She stammer'd out,—no, no, no, no.

Come, come, says he, Pretty Maid,
Let's walk to yon' private Grove,

Cupid always delights in the cooling Shade,
There, I'll read thee a Lesson of Love.
She mends her Pace,
And hastes to the Place,
But if her Love Lecture you'd know;
Let a bashful young Muse,
Plead the Maiden's Excuse,
And answer you,—no, no, no, no.

The vintner's daughter, a barmaid, all ribbon, lace, and feathers from which peeps a round, white pretty face with blue eyes and cherry lips, is playing sweetly on her virginals. She passes the table. "John, come kiss me now, come kiss me now, now, now . . ."

John Gay gets up from the table, reels over to the maid, puts his arms around her, and kisses her. . . .

CHAPTER XV

Lavinia Fenton

Lavinia Fenton is the toast of the town. She is Polly of "The Beggar's Opera." Her pictures are engraved and sold in great numbers. Her life is written. Books of letters and verses to her are published. Pamphlets are made even of her sayings and jests. Charming Miss Fenton, with her winning ways, her sweet eyes, and her simple songs. She sets the sparks of London in a rage. She is painfully importuned and pursued by her numerous lovers. It is deemed expedient that some confidential friends shall escort her nightly home, to prevent her being hurt or run away with.

The playhouse offers up another idol. She is to be accosted in language proper to the deity. Several of her friends set up her worship even in churches. "Life and Death are in her Power—Joys of Heaven and Pains of Hell are at her disposal. Para-

dise is in her arms, and Eternity in every moment that you are present with her. Raptures, Transports, Ecstacies, are the Rewards which they confer. Sighs and Tears, Prayers and broken Hearts are the offerings which are paid her. Her Smiles make Men Happy; her Frowns drive them to Despair. . . . I must here observe that these Idolaters differ from all other kinds of Idolaters. For as others fall out because they worship different Idols, these Idolaters quarrel because they worship the same."

"The Beggar's Opera" is a raging success. It spreads to all the great towns of England. It is played in many places thirty or forty times, and at Bath and Bristol fifty times. Ladies carry about with them its favorite songs inscribed on fans. Houses are furnished with it in screens. It draws wits, statesmen, ladies and gentlemen of fashion, and the most respectable of London's middle class. It drives out the Italian opera. Moreover, it makes Gay rich, and Rich gay—

Then all the mob from the City and Court,
Came to see this ingenious sport,

This same famous Strain,
Which brought Rich his gain,
And maul'd Drury Lane,
Shine or rain.

Gay makes about seven hundred pounds. Rich makes five thousand. It is a dazzling climb for a man who has resorted to pantomime entertainments, and even acted the harlequin himself, to fill up an empty house.

A flood of occasional literature—pamphlets, sermons, letters, newspaper verse—submerges the town. Some praise the opera for its veiled allusions to politicians—"Robin of Bagshot, alias Gorgon, alias Bluff Bob, alias Carbuncle, alias Bob Booty," who is none other than Sir Robert Walpole, and who is designed to represent the Minister's unrefined manners, convivial habits, and alleged robbery of the public. His "dear charmers" are his wife and her rival, Molly Skerrett. One song brings down the house and elicits the praise of pamphleteers:

How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear charmer away!

But while you thus teaze me together,
To neither a word will I say.

Highwaymen and women of the town are not romantic figures, but our poet has made highwaymen handsome and lively, and women of the town beautiful and attractive. Over all he has cast such a glamor of romance and sentimentalism that even Newgate comes to resemble a select pleasure resort.

The morality of the opera comes in for discussion. To many the play seems vicious, an approval of vice and an incitement to wrongdoing. Doctor Herring preaches against the opera in Lincoln's Inn Chapel. Several streets robbers, he states, have confessed in Newgate that they raised their courage at the playhouse by the songs of Macheath. Dean Swift takes the field in his friend's defense. "It is true, indeed, that Mr. Gay, the author of this piece, has been somewhat singular in the course of his fortune, for it has happened that after fourteen years attending the Court, with a large stock of real merit, a modest and agreeable conversation, a hundred promises, and five hundred friends, he has failed of preferment, and upon a very weighty

reason. He lay under the suspicion of having written a libel, or lampoon, against a great Minister. Having lain under the suspicion, it seems very just that he should suffer the punishment, because in this most reformed age, the virtues of a Prime Minister are no more to be suspected than the chastity of Cæsar's wife. . . .

"I am assured that several worthy clergymen in this city went privately to see 'The Beggar's Opera' represented; and that the fleering coxcombs in the pit amused themselves with making discoveries, and spreading the names of those gentlemen round the audience.

"I shall not pretend to vindicate a clergyman who would appear openly in his habit at the theater, with such a vicious crew as might probably stand round him at such comedies. But when the Lord Chancellors, who are Keepers of the King's Conscience; when the Judges of the land, whose title is reverend; when ladies, who are bound by the rules of their sex to the strictest decency, appear in the theater without censure—I cannot understand why a young clergyman, who comes concealed out

of curiosity to see an innocent and moral play, should be so highly condemned. Nor do I much approve the rigour of a great prelate, who said, 'he hoped none of his clergy were there.' I should be very sorry that any of them should be so weak as to imitate a Court chaplain in England, who preached against 'The Beggar's Opera,' which will probably do more good than a thousand sermons of so stupid, so injudicious, and so prostitute a divine. —Upon the whole, I deliver my judgment, that nothing but servile attachment to a party, affectation of singularity, lamentable dulness, mistaken zeal, or studied hypocrisy, can have the least reasonable objection against this excellent moral performance of the celebrated Mr. Gay."

"Celebrated" is correct. Our poet is a personage. His play is successful. He is making money. He has had his little dig at Walpole. He is the happiest man in the world. "John Gay is at present so employed in the elevated airs of the opera . . . that I can scarce obtain a categorical answer—to anything," Pope writes to Swift in February, 1728.

The Dean advises Gay not to print his opera

before it is acted—"for I defy all your subscriptions to amount to eight hundred pounds." The advice however, comes too late. Gay has already sold the copyright of the "Fables" and "The Beggar's Opera" for ninety guineas. The opera is published on February 14, 1728.

Gay to Swift, February 15: "I have deferred writing to you from time to time, till I could give you an account of 'The Beggar's Opera.' It is acted at the playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields with such success that the playhouse has been crowded every night. To-night is the fifteenth time of acting, and it is thought it will run a fortnight longer. I know this account will give you pleasure, as I have pushed through this precarious affair without servility or flattery.—As to any favours from great men, I am in the same state you left me, but I am a great deal happier, as I have no expectations. The Duchess of Queensberry has signalised her friendship to me upon this occasion, in a conspicuous manner . . . Lord Cobham says, I should have printed it in Italian over against the English, that the ladies might have understood what they read.

The outlandish (as they now call it) opera has been so thin of late, that some have called it the Beggar's Opera, and if the run continues, I fear I shall have remonstrances drawn up against me by the Royal Academy of Music"—the managers and patrons of the Italian Opera.

To which the Dean replies: "I bought your opera to-day for sixpence—a cussed print. I find there is neither dedication nor preface, both which wants I approve—it is the *grand goût.*"

Gay keeps his friend informed of the progress of his opera. "On the benefit day of one of the actresses, one of the players falling sick, they [the Directors of the Royal Academy of Music] were obliged to give out another play, or dismiss the audience. A play was given out, but the audience called out for 'The Beggar's Opera'; and they were forced to play it, or the audience would not have stayed."

Swift is keenly interested in his friend's triumph. To John Gay, March 28, 1728: "We have your opera for sixpence, and we are as full of it as

London can be . . . continually acting, and the House crammed, and the Lord Lieutenant several times there, laughing his heart out.

"We hear a million of stories about the opera, of the encore at the song—'That was levell'd at me,' when two great Ministers were in a box together, and all the world staring at them.

"I am very glad your opera has mended your purse, though perhaps it may spoil your Court.

"I think that rich rogue Rich, should in conscience make you a present of two or three hundred guineas. I am impatient that such a dog, by sitting still, should get five times more than the author.

"Will you desire my Lord Bolingbroke, Mr. Pulteney, and Mr. Pope, to command you to buy an annuity with two thousand pounds?—that you may laugh at Courts, and bid Ministers 'kiss' etc.—And ten to one they will be ready to grease you when you are fat.

"Ever preserve some spice of the alderman, and prepare against age and dulness and sickness, and coldness or death of friends. A whore has a resource

left, that she can turn bawd; but an old decayed poet is a creature abandoned, and at mercy, when he can find none.

"I hope your new Duchess will treat you at the Bath, and that you will be too wise to lose your money at play.

"Lord, how the schoolboys at Westminster, and University lads adore you at this juncture! Have you made as many men laugh as Ministers can make weep?"

"The Beggar's Opera" continues to be acted. There is not the least probability of a thin audience. Gay is famous. "My portrait mezzotinto is published from Mrs. Howard's painting." The run is prodigious. Will it ever end?

The sixty-second performance of "The Beggar's Opera." Lavinia Fenton is uncommonly gay and sprightly, and sweeter than ever. There is a leap, a fire, an enthusiasm in her lines—

O what pain it is to part!
Can I leave thee, can I leave thee?

O what pain it is to part!
Can thy Polly ever leave thee?

The audience catches her fire and enthusiasm. The curtain drops. A wild burst of applause—"Polly—Polly"—from every side of the house. A pretty bow, a kiss, then off the stage she runs, into the arms of a nobleman who awaits her in the wings and who throws a cloak about her shoulders—past the scenery, out of the stage door, into a waiting coach-and-four—and away, away, away over the muddy roads of London.

That night Lavinia Fenton becomes, if not in name, the real Duchess of Bolton.

CHAPTER XVI

"Polly"

"I HAVE been at the Bath about ten days," Gay to Swift on May 16, 1728, "and I have played at no game but once, and that at backgammon with Mr. Lewis, who is very much your humble servant.—Lord and Lady Bolingbroke are here. They both desire me to make their compliments—as does Mr. Congreve, who is in a very ill state of health. I do not know how long I shall stay here, because I am now, as I have been all my life, at the disposal of others. I drink the waters, and am in hopes to lay in a stock of health, some of which I wish to communicate to you." And again on July 6: "In five or six days I set out, upon an excursion to Herefordshire, to Lady Scudamore's, but shall return here the beginning of August.—The weather is extremely hot, the place is very empty; I have an inclination to study, but the heat makes it impossible."

On which Dean Swift remarks to Pope: "I suppose Mr. Gay will return from the Bath with twenty pounds more flesh and two hundred pounds less in money. Providence never designed him to be above two and twenty, by this thoughtlessness and culpability. He has as little foresight of age, sickness, poverty, or loss of admirers, as a girl of fifteen."

Gay passes six months at Bath. The success of "The Beggar's Opera" has heartened him. At once he conceives the idea of following up this triumph with another triumph of the same kind. Thus encouraged, he composes a sequel to "The Beggar's Opera," which he calls by the name of the heroine of that piece—that is to say, "Polly." The characters are transported to the West India plantations, where their adventures are continued, but the satire is more pointed and severe.

The piece is accepted for production by Rich at the Royal Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The terms are agreed upon. Everything is ready for a rehearsal, when the Lord Chamberlain sends an order from the country prohibiting any play to be

rehearsed upon the stage until it has been first of all supervised by his Grace.

On Saturday morning, December 7, 1728, our bard waits upon the Lord Chamberlain. He desires to have the honor of reading the opera to his Grace, but is ordered instead to leave it. The bard departs. On Thursday, December 12, Gay receives it from his Grace with this answer—"that it was not allowed to be acted but commanded to be suppresst." This is told him in general, without any reason assigned, or any charge against him of his having given any particular offense.

Walpole is at the bottom of it all. He is the least vindictive of men, but he thinks Gay is going too far. The poet unconsciously is acting for the opposition party, and Walpole, when he thinks it worth while, has a short and effective way with his political enemies. He resolves, rather than suffer himself to be produced for thirty nights together upon the stage in the person of a highwayman, to make use of his friend the Duke of Grafton. As Lord Chamberlain, his friend puts a stop to the representation of the play.

The prohibition is an excellent thing. "Polly" cannot be performed in public, but, there being no censorship of books, it can be printed. Everybody wants to read the opera which the government has prohibited. Gay's friends therefore decide to publish the opera by subscription. The opposition rallies round the author. The opera is printed, and copies are sold at extravagant prices and in immensely large numbers. Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough, Congreve's eccentric friend, gives a hundred pounds for a single book.

The Duchess of Queensberry touts for our poet everywhere at Court. She is vehement in her attempt to have the embargo removed from his play. She even offers to read it to his Majesty in his closet, that he may be satisfied there is no offense in it. George II escapes the dilemma. He will be delighted to receive her Grace in his closet, but he hopes to amuse her better than by the literary employment she proposes.

The Duchess dislikes his Majesty. He economizes his income with the minute regularity of a clerk. He takes great pleasure in counting his money, piece

by piece. He is methodical, regular, like his German forebears. He seems to think his having done a thing to-day an unanswerable reason for his doing it to-morrow. He never forgets a date. He is no better than a drill sergeant. The Duchess thanks his Majesty but insists on the condition of her offer.

The day after the Duchess's interview with the King, February 27, 1729, William Stanhope, the Vice Chamberlain, carries to the Duchess a verbal message not to come to Court. Whereupon she sits down and pens the reply: "The Duchess of Queensberry is surprised and well pleased that the King hath given her so agreeable a command as to stay from Court—where she never came for diversion, but to bestow a great civility on the King and Queen. She hopes by such an unprecedented order as this is, that the King will see as few as he wishes at his Court, particularly such as are to think or speak truth. I dare not do otherwise, and ought not —nor could have imagined that it would not have been the very highest compliment that I could possibly pay the King to endeavour to support truth and innocence in his house—particularly when the

King and Queen both told me that they had not read Mr. Gay's play. I have certainly done right, then, to stand by my own words rather than his Grace of Grafton's, who has neither made use of truth, judgment, nor honour, through this whole affair, either for himself or his friends."

Stanhope reads this. He begs the Duchess to reflect before sending it. Another note? She consents to write another note. She does so, and hands it to him. He reads it. He chooses the first.

The Duke resigns his office of Admiral of Scotland. This he has been intending to do right along upon account of ill usage from the Ministry. The incident hastens him in what he has determined.

The affair creates an immense sensation in Court circles. Arbuthnot to Swift, March 19, 1729: "The inoffensive John Gay is now become one of the obstructions to the peace of Europe, the terror of the Ministers, the chief author of the Craftsman, and all the seditious pamphlets which have been published against the Government. He has got several turned out of their places; the greatest ornament of the Court [the Duchess] banished

from it for his sake; another great lady [Mrs. Howard] in danger of being chassée likewise; about seven or eight Duchesses pushing forward like the ancient Circumcelliones in the Church, who shall suffer martyrdom upon his account first. He is the darling of the city. If he should travel about the country, he would have hecatombs of roasted oxen sacrificed to him. Since he became so conspicuous, Will Pulteney hangs his head to see himself so much outdone in the career of glory. I hope he will get a good deal of money by printing his play, but I really believe he would get more by showing his person; and I can assure you, this is the very identical John Gay, whom you formerly knew, and lodged with in Whitehall two years ago."

One result is that the apartments at Whitehall, which belongs to the Crown, have to be surrendered. On the other hand, two large editions, amounting to 10,500 copies, of "Polly," are printed in 1729. From the sale Gay derives about twelve hundred pounds. In his estimation the opera has been a huge success.

It is the end of Gay's hopes of Court preferment. It is not unexpected. Bolingbroke has written to Swift in June, 1727, "I wish John Gay success in his pursuit, but I think he has some qualities which will keep him down in the world."

However, hope still glimmers. Gay thinks that he may in time live down the disfavor at Court, in which he has been involved by his earnest partisans—Gay's "female faction," as they are called. The office of Poet Laureate becomes vacant in 1730. Will it not be offered to him? He has written "Fables" for a young Prince, etc., etc. But Colley Cibber is appointed. It is at last brought home to our poet that his day as a courtier has passed for good and all.

For solace Gay vents his spleen in a burlesque on Cibber.

> This is the day when, right or wrong,
> I, Colley Cibber, Esquire,
> Must for my sack indite a song
> And thrum my venal lyre.

And Walpole comes in for his share in the Fable, "The Vulture, the Sparrow, and Other Birds."

In days of yore (my cautious rhymes
Always except the present times),
A greedy Vulture, skill'd in game,
Inur'd to guilt, unaw'd by shame,
Approach'd the throne in evil hour,
And step by step intrudes to power.
When at the Royal Eagle's ear
He longs to ease the Monarch's care:

The Monarch grants. With pride elate,
Behold him Minister of State!
Around him throng the feather'd rout;
Friends must be serv'd and some must out.
Each thinks his own the best pretension;
This asks a place, and that a pension.
The Nightingale was set aside,
A forward Daw (Cibber) his room supply'd.—

Thousands of hireling Cocks attend him,
As blust'ring bullies, to defend him.
At once the Ravens were discarded,
And Magpies with their posts rewarded.—
Those fowls of omen I detest,
That pry into another's nest.—

When rogues like these (a Sparrow cries)
To honours and employments rise,

I court no favour, ask no place;
From such, preferment is disgrace.
Within my thatch'd retreat I find
(What these ne'er feel) true peace of mind.

CHAPTER XVII

Illness

Gay is in bed with a severe attack of fever. He is attended by the faithful Arbuthnot, and carefully looked after by the Duchess of Queensberry. His friends are apprehensive.

"No words can tell you the great concern I feel for you," Pope writes. "I assure you it was not, and is not, lessened by the immediate apprehension I have now every day lain under of losing my mother. Be assured, no duty less than that should have kept me one day from attending your condition. I would come and take a room by you at Hampstead, to be with you daily, were she not still in danger of death. I have constantly had particular accounts of you from the doctor [Arbuthnot], which have not ceased to alarm me yet. God preserve your life, and restore your health! I really beg it for my own sake, for I feel I love you more than I thought in health, though I always loved you

a great deal. If I am so unfortunate as to bury my poor mother, and yet have the good fortune to have my prayers heard for you, I hope we may live most of our remaining days together. If, as I believe, the air of a better clime, as the southern part of France, may be thought useful for your recovery, thither I would go with you, infallibly; and it is very probable we might get the Dean with us, who is in that abandoned state already in which I shall shortly be, as to other cares and duties. Dear Gay, be as cheerful as your sufferings will permit. God is a better friend than a Court. Even an honest man is a better. I promise you my entire friendship in all events."

Our poet gradually gets well. But, though in better health, his spirits are low. "Not the divine looks, the kind favours, and the expressions of the divine Duchess who, hereafter, shall be in the place of a Queen to me—nor the inexpressible goodness of the Duke, can in the least cheer me. The Drawing Room no more receives light from those two stars. There is now what Milton says is in hell—darkness invisible. Oh, that I had never known

what a Court was! Dear Pope, what a barren soil (to me so) have I been striving to produce something of?"

Doctor Arbuthnot and the Duchess confer. The poet's fever has left him. He is well physically, but mentally he is ill. They shall entertain him, engage him in conversation, never permit him to be alone with himself. The Duchess tells him of secret scandals, doings in London, the latest play, the newest book. The Doctor informs him on politics, foreign affairs, happenings at Pope's Head, Cock Tavern, Will's, the Cocoa Tree, and discourses lightly and fluently on every subject, from pills and painting to Pentateuch and poetry. Each morning finds him in Gay's room, sporting his tie wig, scarlet cloak, black velvet coat, gold-headed cane, deep ruffles, sword, and red snuffbox. This morning he is to discourse on the quack remedies of his time.

"I tell you, 'tis an easie thing for a man of parts to be a surgeon. Do but buy a lancet, forceps, saw. Talk a little of contusions, fractures, compress, and bandage—you'll presently by most people be thought an excellent surgeon."

Five thousand pounds have been voted by the Treasury to a woman for the secret of her three remedies for disease. They consist of three things—a powder, a decoction, and a pill. The powder is made of calcined egg shells and snails. The decoction is made by boiling together herbs, soaps, honey, and swine's cresse burnt to blackness, in water. The pills are made of calcined snails, wild carrot seeds, hips and haws, ashen keys, etc., burnt to blackness and mixed with soap and honey.

A sharp-witted cobbler picks up a collection of old recipes. Venice soap will cure cancer; the juice of wild cucumber will help dropsy; snails beaten up and laid to the feet will soothe ague; asthma can be cured by drinking a glass of wine in which wood lice have been steeped; loss of memory can be cured by rubbing the temples with castor oil and swallowing small pieces of a swallow's heart every morning for a month; and sore eyes, by blowing powdered hen's dung into the affected parts at bedtime. The cobbler hangs up a sign describing himself as a physician, and practices his art with success.

"Ay, I tell you, 'tis an easie thing for a man of parts to be a physician or a surgeon"; and the Doctor gets up from his chair and walks about the room, singing—

> . . . Infusions and lotions,
> Decoctions, and gargles, and pills,
> Electuaries, powders, and potions,
> Spermaceti, salts, scammony, squills,
> Horse aloes, burnt alum, and agaric,
> Balms, benzoin, bloodstone, and dill,
> Castor, camphor, and acid tartaric,
> With specifics for every ill.

The cure is successful. Our poet is in a happy mood again. To Swift, March 18, 1729: "I am but just recovered from the severest fit of sickness that ever anybody had who escaped death. I was several times given up by the physicians, and everybody that attended me; and upon my recovery was judged to be in so ill a condition, that I should be miserable for the remainder of my life; but contrary to all expectation, I am perfectly recovered, and have no remainder of the distempers that at-

tacked me, which were at the same time fever, asthma, and pleurisy."

In May, 1729, the Duke of Queensberry takes him up and bundles him off to Scotland. Our poet is happy enough. His only trouble is that the success of "Polly" has made it attractive to unscrupulous booksellers. He has about twenty lawsuits with booksellers for pirating his book. However, they do not much disturb his good humor and equanimity, nor destroy his appreciation of the travel and scenery through the highlands of Scotland.

In June Doctor Arbuthnot reports to Dean Swift; "Mr. Gay is returned from Scotland, and has recovered his strength of the journey."

CHAPTER XVIII

The Duchess of Queensberry

JOHN GAY is now the avowed protégé of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. He spends the greater part of his time either at their country seat, Middleton Stoney, Amesbury, in Wiltshire, or at their town residence in Burlington Gardens. He has begun his career under the impression that it is somebody's duty to provide for him, and this impression still clings. He has asked nothing better of this world than to be a pet of the great. Fate has been kind to him. His wishes have been granted. And so now he is very happy.

The Duchess has wit. She has an abundance of charm. She is beautiful and eccentric. She dresses herself in the style in vogue when she was a young girl, refusing to cut and curl her hair like a sheep's head, or wear one of those trolloping sacks. She has large, luminous blue eyes, a broad forehead, golden curls, and full lips.

She loves gayety. She gives many balls and masquerades. Her odd freaks strain the forbearance of her friends. At a masquerade in her town house she orders half the company to leave at midnight, and allows only those whom she likes to stay for supper. She never gives meat suppers. Guests must be content with half an apple puff and a little wine and water.

She usually wears an apron. This article of attire is forbidden to be worn at the royal drawing rooms. She appears in it one day. Her entrance is consequently opposed by the Lord in Waiting. She tears it off, throws it in his face, and walks on.

She is Prior's "Kitty." On the Duchess first being allowed when a girl to appear in public, he had written for her "The Female Phaëton."

> Kitty at heart's desire
> Obtained the chariot for a day
> And set the world on fire.

Moreover, she has a kind heart.

But her life is no different from the lives of

other great ladies. The demands of an intricate toilet occupy the greater part of her mornings, visiting and scandal her afternoons, cards and intrigues her nights. She hies herself to a masquerade at Ranelagh or Vauxhall, or perhaps organizes some sort of frolic to a more out-of-the-way garden of the town. She has none of her husband's company, except at dinner. The Duke has his own pursuits, his own friends, his own interests as well. Many nights he is drunk. She has no intellectual resources whatever. She reads few books. She knows nothing of what goes on and cares nothing. Her maid dresses her. She has a carriage and four horses, her running footmen before, her hanging footmen behind. She has her town house and her country house. Her nurse looks after her children. Everything is provided. Nothing is left to desire.

Gay is the pet of the household. He is a willing attendant on my Lady. In the morning he waits outside her door, a little round French abbé of a man, lazy, sleek, soft-handed and soft-hearted, forever eating, and saying good things. He has the

good fortune to be admitted early. He finds his Lady at her chocolate. She has a dish of it in one hand, and with the other seems occupied in sorting a large parcel of guineas. She is dressed in a black velvet petticoat. Says she, "I had a raquet last night —no less than sixteen tables, and it was towards five when we broke up. I won, 'tis true—had charming luck"—and here my Lady clasps her thin white hands—"but see how I have been cheated"—pointing to a lesser heap of gold. "All these are counterfeit. Not one good guinea among them." She starts to sing softly—"The Court—no—that's out—

'The Park, the Ring, the Play,
The Flambeaux' blaze that rivals day,
Assemblies, Masquerades, Reviews,
Balls, Marriages, Divorces, News
Of every kind, till out of breath;
'Tis life with these, without them—Death.' "

Our poet offers his condolences. "Oh, never mind—but do let us write a letter together to Mrs. Howard." And so the morning passes away in a

pleasant bit of fooling, the writing of joint letters to their friends.

Two o'clock. The bell is rung for dinner. "Do hurry, John. Run over to that table and tell me which fan you like best." Gay gets up from the divan and walks over to the table. He examines the various painted fans her Ladyship has ordered. Here is Œnone in a lonely grove, with withered garlands on every bough; Dido in her last distress, with pale cheeks and bloodshot eyes; then chaste Diana, stealing to the soft embraces of her young Endymion—there are blushes on her cheeks; or young Narcissus bending over a fountain and viewing his image in the crystal flood. Near the edge of the table is one fan depicting the first interview of Isaac and Rebecca. Others show Joseph and his mistress, the taking of Porto Bello, the humors of 'Change Alley, etc. All are mounted with diamonds and inlaid with jewels.—"Chaste Diana"—So it is, and Gay accompanies her Ladyship to dinner.

Everyone eats ravenously in these days. Gay outdoes everyone. He glances at the menu.

Turkey	Partridge
Boiled Leg of Mutton	Sweetbreads
Greens, etc.	Collared Pig
Plum Pudding	Creamed Apple Tart
Roast Loin of Veal	Crabs
Venison Pastry	Fricassee of Eggs
	Pigeons
	(No dessert to be had)

"Blessed be he that invented Pudding. Ah! what an excellent thing is an English Pudding."

Gay eats, drinks, and is jolly. As the French philosopher Descartes used to explain his existence by "*Cogito, ergo sum,*" the greatest proof of our poet's existence is "*Edi, ergo est.*"

After dinner Gay and her Ladyship seek the real interest of the day. The Duchess orders her chair, emblazoned with her coat of arms and lined with blue satin, and proceeds with her friend to the theater or the opera. After that, balls, masquerades, parties, receptions, social pleasures.

The Duke has his own pursuits. He thrusts his head into a round of politicians at Will's, and sometimes smokes a pipe at Child's. This Sunday

night he is at the St. James Coffee House. He seats himself at the end of a high table and calls for a clean pipe, a paper of tobacco, a dish of coffee, a wax candle, and the "Daily Court," which contains news from Naples, Rome, Vienna, Frankfort, Liège, and Paris. Later he orders a glass of Burton ale and a slice of hung beef.

Over there five men are discussing the deplorable state of France, Boileau, Racine, and whether the late French King was most like Augustus Cæsar or Nero. The controversy is carried on with great heat on both sides. A crowd of beaux flutter around the lovely barmaid. In the corner sits a squire, dressed in the familiar long wig, long coat with silver buttons, breeches and top boots. A puffed red face consumes incredible quantities of ale. The Duke turns away and remarks to himself, "A mere vegetable which grows up and rots on the same spot of ground." After a while he joins the little committee of politics in the Inner Room.

On other nights the Duke can be seen at the Grecian, the Cocoa Tree, and the Star and Garter, whither he drives to regale on macaroni. Betty's

fruit shop in St. James is a favorite place of his for eating strawberries and discussing the news of the day.

There is dissension in the Duke's household. A friend of his has come for a short visit. He is a *petit maître*. Our poet dislikes *petits maîtres*. He cannot countenance their ways and doings. This one is simply devastating.

The creature begins his day at ten o'clock in the forenoon by a general reception of visitors in his dressing chamber, having first fortified himself for that arduous task by swallowing a cogue of Nantsey. When the last batch of callers take their departure, he rises and places himself under the superintendence of his valet for two hours. Now is brought into requisition his extensive assortment of perfumery—oil of Venus, spirit of lavender, attar of roses, spirit of cinnamon, *eau de luce*. Articles of attire are severally and carefully sprinkled. With a cake of sweet-scented soap he freely lathers his hands and face. He next dabs his face with scented powder till it is as white as that of a miller. He then plasters his hair with scented

pomatum, and having perfumed his pocket handkerchief with rose or jessamine water, ties his cravat and adjusts his periwig. He finally sits down to dine with the household at two.

The repast concluded, he buckles on his sword, brushes his hat with great care, gives it the cock, and places it with much ceremony on his head. For a brief time he surveys himself in the mirror. Quite satisfied with his appearance, he takes up his cane, orders his sedan chair, and proceeds to White's Coffee House. There for an hour he airs his political views, tickles the ears of the company with choice samples of his wit and pleasantry, and throws in the gist of the latest scandalous story. Then this killing creature hails a chair and is borne along to the door of the playhouse. Instead of attending to the performance (his mind recoils with horror at the thought), he wanders from pillar to post, now laughing and chatting with his friends, now pulling out by turns his watch and pocket handkerchief. The play concluded, he repairs to the residence of a boon companion. With him he spends the remainder of the night, lending a hand at crump, ombre, loo,

or whist, over bowls of punch and bottles of claret until the small hours of the following morning. Not infrequently he is conducted reeling home by a friendly watchman, bribed with sixpence for the purpose.

It is not difficult to see why our poet detests the breed. Such is the effeminacy of the man that he carries around with him ivory and tortoise shell combs; and he combs his wig while sitting in the park or the theater. Gay sighs with relief when this creature's visit comes to an end and he leaves Burlington Gardens.

Amidst theaters, balls, parties, assemblies, Gay does manage to get off a few, but only a few, letters to his friends. To Swift: "I continue to drink nothing but water so that you cannot require any poetry from me—I do not hate the world, but I laugh at it; for none but fools can be in earnest about a trifle."

Then on July 4, 1730: "I have left off wine and writing; for I really think that man must be a bold writer, who trusts to wit, without it. I took your advice; and some time ago took to love, and made

some advances to the lady you sent me to in Soho, but met no return; so I have given up all thoughts of it, and have now no pursuit or amusement. You have often told me there is a time that everyone wishes for some settlement of his own. I have frequently that feeling about me, but I fancy it will hardly ever be my lot; so that I will endeavour to pass away life as agreeably as I can, in the way I am." However, the poet has the not inconsiderable sum of six thousand pounds which the Duke keeps in trust for him.

The joint letters to Mrs. Howard are written frequently. "I have several complaints to make to you of her treatment, but I shall only mention the most barbarous of them. She hath absolutely forbid her dog to be fond of me, and takes all occasions to snub her if she shows me the least civility. How do you think Lord Herbert would take such usage from you, or any lady in Christendom? . . . Now she says I must write you a long letter; but to be sure I cannot say what I would about her, because she is looking over me as I write. If I should tell any good of her, I know she would

not like it, and I have said my worst of her already."

And again: "I cannot neglect this opportunity of writing to you and begging you to be a mediator between my Lady Duchess and me; we having at present a quarrel about a fishing rod; and at the same time to give her your opinion whether you think it proper for her to stay here till after Christmas, for I find that neither place nor preferment will let me leave her; and when she hath been long enough in one place, prevail with her, if you can, to go to another. I would always have her do what she will, because I am glad to be of her opinion, and because I know it is what I must always do myself."

"Are we never to live together more as once we did?" Pope writes our poet in October.

And so the year 1730 passes, quickly and agreeably. Gay endeavors to make some return to his host and hostess for their kindness by acting as private secretary to the Duchess. But the duties are merely nominal. Besides, his assistance is of little

value. It is only accepted in order to lessen the weight of the obligation under which they think—though erroneously—our poet may be suffering. His hosts take him everywhere—to splendid masquerades and select parties. Wine flows, women abound—pretty, free, and smiling. The poet makes merry.

"Good-night," says Gay, on his way to bed.

"Good-morning, sir," replies the shoemaker, taking down his shutters.

CHAPTER XIX

Bath

A LOUD ringing of the Abbey bells to announce to all and sundry the arrival of her Ladyship, the Duchess of Queensberry, and the famous poet, John Gay. Invalids are fond of news. Upon the first peal of the bells, they send out to inquire for whom they ring. But each visitor is received in the same way—even Mr. Bullock, an eminent cow-keeper of Tottenham.

All sorts and conditions of men flock here: notables and notorieties, members of Parliament, chaplains and captains, noblemen with ribbons and stars, quacks, duchesses, dove-colored Quakers, fortune hunters, lackeys, lank-haired Methodists, bishops, and boarding-school misses; Ferdinand, Count Fathom, as well as my Lord Ogleby; Lady Bellaston, Geoffrey Wildgoose, Commodore Trunnion, and Tugwell, the cobbler; Lismahago and

Tabitha Bramble, Mrs. Candour, Lady Sneerwell, and Sir Benjamin Backbite. Bath is their fitting environment. In fact, they were all born in Bath.

The Duchess and Gay have come for a few days only. The next morning, my Lady, dressed in her bathing clothes, is brought in a closed chair to the Cross Bath. There the music plays her into the Bath, and the women who tend her present her with a little wooden dish, like a basin, in which she puts her handkerchief and a nosegay of flowers.

The Bath is small, not over clean. But it is a gay crowd that fills it. All is good humor and diversion. The Duchess's costume is hideous and unbecoming, as are the costumes of the other members of her sex. They wear jackets and petticoats of brown linen, and ordinary chip hats, in which they fix handkerchiefs to wipe the sweat from their faces.

My Lady walks about the Bath, listens to the music, and exchanges jests—of a Rabelaisian kind. In an hour's time she returns in her chair to her private lodgings. Then she reappears in the Pump Room (en déshabillé be it noted) to drink the

waters, talk scandal, and quiz the dress and appearance of the motley, untidy-looking crew.

Daily service at the Abbey, dinner in the afternoon, a stroll about the city. Fine avenues of trees, fish ponds, and bowling greens; clipped yew hedges, terraces, and flights of steps enlivened with beautiful stone and lead vases and garden sculpture. Half an hour at the bookseller's, a walk in the meadows, a visit to a toyshop. Visits in the evening after tea, and the day winds up with cards, dancing, or the playhouse.

> Mornings at the Bath—"How d'ye do?" The rest of the day—"What trumps?"

Balls are the principal events of the season. Severest sumptuary laws are enacted. No boots for the gentlemen, no swords. No aprons for the ladies. Our Duchess has come before in an apron worth five hundred pounds. King Beau Nash tears it off, throws it contemptuously aside, with the remark that such things are for abigails only. But there are black Russell petticoats, flowered, and ash-colored silk quilted petticoats, and Atlas petticoats of scarlet

and gold, and black velvet petticoats edged with silver.

The minuet is danced first. Then comes the country dance, the Duchess and the other ladies of rank leading. After the minuet the lady is returned to her seat, and the gentleman proceeds to another partner. Each gentleman is obliged to dance twice. At nine there is an interval for rest, and the gentlemen help their partners to tea. All dancing, by the rules, has to finish precisely at eleven o'clock, even if the dancers are in the middle of a set.

The last day for our Duchess and Gay. The Pump Room is crowded like a Welsh fair. The highest quality and the lowest tradesfolk jostle each other without ceremony—hail fellow well met. The noise of the music playing in the gallery, the heat and flavor of such a crowd, the hum and buzz of their conversation. The Duchess glances out of a Pump Room window. Right underneath is a huge cistern, with the patients up to their necks in hot water. Whether it is owing to the steam that surrounds them, or to the heat of the water, or to the

nature of the dress, or to all three causes together, they look flushed and frightful.

The Duchess spies Gay and waves to him. He is red, and perspiration streams down his fat face.

"Really now—I must confess—it is to me incomprehensible why the ladies choose that frightful unbecoming dress to bathe in."

CHAPTER XX

Correspondence

JOHN GAY goes courting. "When I was in town (after a bashful fit, for having writ something like a love letter, and in two years making one visit), I writ to Mrs. Drelincourt, to apologize for my behaviour, and received a civil answer, but had not time to see her. They are naturally very civil, so that I am not so sanguine as to interpret this as any encouragement."

The Dean counsels more forceful methods. "You are the silliest lover in Christendom. If you like Mrs. Drelincourt, why do you not command her to take you? If she does not, she is not worth pursuing; you do her too much honour; she has neither sense nor taste, if she dares to refuse you, though she had ten thousand pounds."

The poet has remarked, "You used to blame me for over-solicitude about myself. I am now grown so rich that I do not think myself worth thinking

on." To which Swift replies: "I cannot allow you rich enough till you are worth seven thousand pounds, which will bring you three hundred pounds per annum, and this will maintain you, with the perquisite of spunging, while you are young, and when you are old, will afford you a pint of port at night, two servants, and an old maid, a little garden, and pen and ink—provided you live in the country. And what are you doing towards increasing your fame and your fortune? Have you no scheme either in verse or prose? The Duchess should keep you at hard meat, and by that means force you to write."

But Gay is busy on an opera, "Achilles," having in mind the design to ridicule Homer's "Odyssey." He had already finished a comedy, "The Distrest Wife," and a humorous piece, "The Rehearsal at Goatham," which ventilates his grievance against Walpole. A second series of the "Fables" proceeds apace.

The Dean is in ignorance of these literary schemes. He believes his friend is wasting his time in eating and idling. He counsels exercise and work,

hard work. "If your ramble was on horseback, I am glad of it on account of your health; but I know your arts of patching up a journey between stage coaches, and friends' coaches, for you are as arrant a cockney as any hosier in Cheapside—I have often had it in my head to put it into yours, that you ought to have some great work in scheme, that may take up seven years to finish, besides two or three under-ones."

As time passes Gay becomes less satisfied with his condition. His health is worse. He is also annoyed at the ennui which is the result of an unoccupied life. In his letters there creeps a note of irritability. To Swift, March 13, 1732: "I find myself dispirited, for want of having some pursuit. Indolence and idleness are the most tiresome things in the world, and I begin to find a dislike to society. I think I ought to try to break myself of it, but I cannot resolve to set about it. Those who were your old acquaintances are almost the only people I visit; and, indeed, upon trying all, I like them best. . . . If you would advise the Duchess to confine me four hours a day to my own room,

while I am in the country, I will write—for I cannot confine myself as I ought."

Swift again chides him on his laziness. "It is your pride or laziness, more than your chair-hire that makes the town expensive. No honour is lost by walking in the dark; and in the day, you may beckon a blackguard boy under a gate (to clean your shoes)—and get half a crown's worth of health. I find by the whole cast of your letter that you are as giddy and volatile as ever; just the reverse of Mr. Pope, who has always loved a domestic life from his youth.—You pretend to preach up riding and walking to the Duchess, yet from my knowledge of you after twenty years, you have always joined a violent desire of perpetually shifting places and company, with a rooted laziness, and an utter impatience of fatigue. A coach and six horses is the utmost exercise you can bear; and this only when you can fill it with such company as is best suited to your taste, and how glad would you be if it could waft you in the air to avoid jolting; while I who am so much later in life can, or at least could, ride five hundred miles on a

trotting horse.—You mortally hate writing, only because it is the thing you chiefly ought to do, as well to keep up the vogue you have in the world, as to make you easy in your fortune. You are merciful to everything but money, your best friend, whom you treat with inhumanity."

Gay follows his friend's advice. He gives a little more time to his literary work. The second series of "Fables" will soon be ready for the press. "Though this is a kind of writing that appears very easy, I find it the most difficult of any I undertook. After I have invented one fable, and finished it, I despair of finding out another.—I have also a sort of scheme to raise my finances by doing something for the stage—with this, and some reading, and a great deal of exercise, I propose to pass my summer"—in a letter to Swift, May 19, 1732.

The poet visits the country seat of Sir William Wyndham in Somersetshire, and returns in October, 1732. "I am at last returned from my Somersetshire expedition," he writes to Pope, "but since my return I cannot boast of my health as before I went, for I am frequently out of order with my

colical complaint, so as to make me uneasy and dispirited, though not to any violent degree.—All this journey I performed on horseback, and I am very much disappointed that at present I feel myself so little the better for it. I have indeed followed riding and exercise for three months successively, and really think I was as well without it; so that I begin to fear the illness, I have so long complained of, is inherent in my constitution, and that I have nothing for it but patience." As for Mr. Pope's advice about writing a panegyric to Queen Caroline, "I have indeed done it sometimes against my judgment and inclination, and I heartily repent of it. And at present, as I have no desire of reward, and see no just reason of praise, I think I had better let it alone. There are flatterers good enough to be found, and I would not interfere in any gentleman's profession."

CHAPTER XXI

Curtain

On December 17, 1732, John Gay comes to London "to follow his own inventions," which includes the arrangements for producing his opera, "Achilles." About a fortnight later he is taken ill. In less than three days he is dead.

Doctor Arbuthnot, who attended him, imparts the sad tidings to Pope. "Poor Mr. Gay died of an inflammation, and, I believe, at last a mortification of the bowels. It was the most precipitous case I ever knew, having cut him off in three days. He was attended by two physicians besides myself. I believed the distemper mortal from the beginning."

Pope, in his turn, immediately writes to Swift. Swift is so impressed with a foreboding of some misfortune as to leave the letter for some days unread. Even that rugged nature is not above the common self-deception with which we sometimes

cheat ourselves of the full bitterness of sorrow by mixing it with courage, drop by drop.

"It is not a time to complain that you have not answered me two letters—it is not now indeed a time to think of myself, when one of the nearest and longest ties I have ever had, is broken all on a sudden, by the unexpected death of poor Mr. Gay. An inflammatory fever hurried him out of this life in three days. He died last night at nine o'clock, not deprived of his senses entirely at last, and possessing them perfectly till within five hours. He asked of you a few hours before, when in acute torment by the inflammation in his bowels and breast. His effects are in the Duke of Queensberry's custody. His sisters, we suppose, will be his heirs, who are two widows. As yet it is not known whether or no he left a will. Good God! how often are we to die before we go quite off this stage? In every friend we lose a part of ourselves, and the best part— I shall never see you now, I believe. One of your principal calls to England is at an end. Indeed he was the most amiable by far, his qualities

were the gentlest, but I love you as well and as firmly. Would to God the man we have lost had not been so amiable nor so good! But that is a wish for our own sakes, not for his. Sure if innocence and integrity can deserve happiness, it must be his. Adieu. I can add nothing to what you will feel, and diminish nothing from it."

On the morning of December 23, Gay's body is removed from Burlington House to Exeter Change in the Strand. There it lies in state during the day. At nine o'clock in the evening it is taken for burial to Westminster Abbey, in a hearse with plumes of white and black and appropriate escutcheons, attended by three coaches, each drawn by six horses. The pallbearers are Lord Chesterfield, Lord Cornbury, the Hon. Mr. Berkeley, General Dormer, Mr. Gore and Mr. Pope. The service is read by Doctor Wilcox, Dean of Westminster, and then the poet's remains are deposited in the South Cross Aisle of the Abbey, over against the tomb of Chaucer, choir attending. . . .

And so the soul of John Gay was gathered up in the arms of his Lord and given preferment in the Court of Heavenly Hosts, and his body "interred as a peer of the realm." On his tomb appeared the following epitaph, written by himself:

Life is a jest and all things show it,
I thought so once and now I know it.

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